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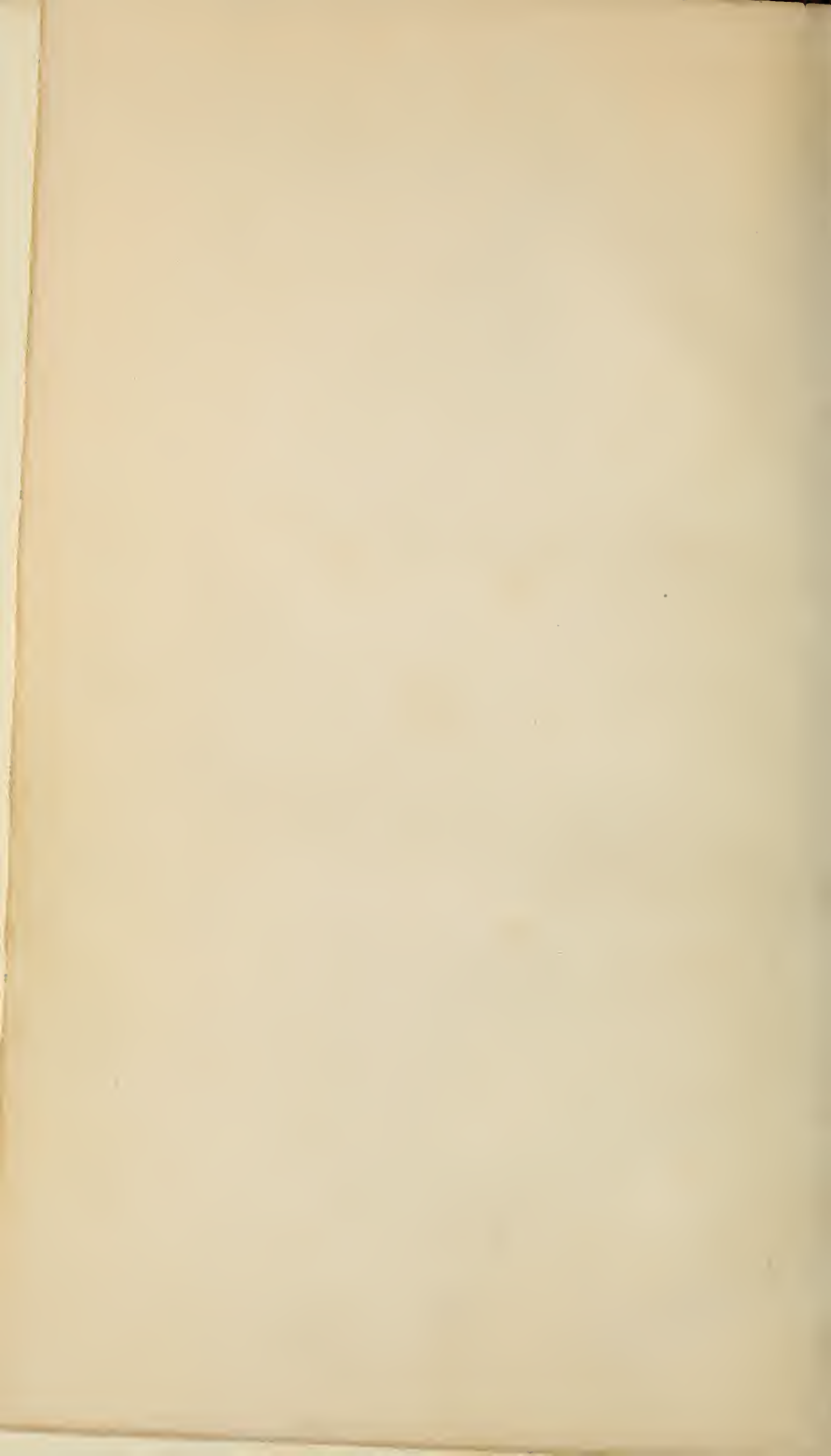
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DOBELL COLLECTION



195

May - June



THE
PLEIAD;
OR,
A SERIES OF ABRIDGEMENTS
OF SEVEN DISTINGUISHED WRITERS,
IN OPPOSITION TO THE
PERNICIOUS DOCTRINES OF
DEISM.

BY THE
REV. FRANCIS WRANGHAM, M. A. F. R. S.
ARCHDEACON OF CLEVELAND.

Better had they ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.



[Only Twenty-five perfect Copies.]

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1820.

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TO
THE MOST REVEREND
EDWARD
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK,
&c. &c.



My dear Lord,

In drawing up the following Abridgements, I merely sought to present to the less educated portion of the public a succession of triumphant arguments for the truth of Christianity, in a shape capable at once of being easily examined and widely circulated. In order to throw additional light upon the series, I prefixed to each, in their separate form, a short account of it's Author or of his train of reasoning; and I, every where, carefully subjoined references to the quoted texts of Scripture in the margin.

My labour has, I own, been an humble one; but I trust, and pray, that it may not be without it's use. The subject seems eminently to demand the exertions of the Clergy; nor can it appear, to sounder judgements, otherwise than honourable to be even *a door-keeper in the*

House of God upon such an occasion. If, indeed, the Deist's assertions are true, *then is our preaching vain.*

Having with your full approbation devoted a portion of that leisure and industry, which it has pleased the Almighty to bestow upon me, to this employment, I feel that I cannot inscribe the result to any one with so much propriety as to your Grace : more especially, since I have had numerous opportunities of knowing the very deep interest which not only as a Prelate, but still more as a Christian, you have taken in defeating the late flagitious attempts to unsettle the faith of the unlearned; because I am convinced that the sanction of a name, so justly venerated, must add tenfold popularity to whatever it protects; and as I thus gain another occasion of expressing the profound respect and regard, with which I remain

Ever your Grace's most obliged
and faithful humble servant,

FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

HUNMANBY,
October 14, 1820.

PREFACE.



With respect to the following Tracts, I would merely premise,

- I. That LELAND has most powerfully exhibited the general mischievousness of Deism, in the Summary attached to his *View of the principal Deistical Writers of England of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*;
- II. That, in reasoning upon the chief Miracles recorded in the Old Testament, no one has surpassed the energy or the conclusiveness of LESLIE'S '*Short and Easy Method with the Deists*';
- III. That DODDRIDGE'S *Three Sermons* on the External Evidences of the New Testament, are universally characterised as compositions evincing the utmost clearness of arrangement;
- IV. That the objections alleged against both Testaments by the French Infidels (Voltaire, Volney, &c.) and repeated with so much scurrility and acrimony by their English brethren, Paine and Carlile, have received in Bishop WATSON'S '*Apology for the Bible*' their plainest and most satisfactory confutation;
- V. That the argument deduced from *Analogy of Systems*, as pointing to the same Author (so often beautifully touched, rather than developed, in the New Testament) has been admirably expanded by Bishop BUTLER;
- VI. That PALEY in his Chapter on the '*Morality of the Gospel*', and SOAME JENYNS (limited and qualified as he is by DR. MACLAINE) present us with a most perspicuous view of the Internal Evidence of Christianity; and,
- VII. That the Inward Witness to it's influences has been unanswerably stated in '*Three Sermons*' by the excellent DR. WATTS.

As this last Tract is upon that *peace of mind which passeth all understanding*, that secret joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not, it may be argued that, in a Volume professedly intended for the benefit of Unbelievers, it is wholly out of place. But, not to observe that an opportunity is thus afforded of rescuing an important text (1 John v. 10.) from the wild and dangerous delusions, to which it has given birth in weak or fantastic minds; it may be remarked that, from the guilty industry with which Sceptical Tracts have been recently disseminated, painful scruples may have been excited in the breasts even of the humble and the pious. It seemed wanting, also, to complete the cycle of Christian evidence.

I subjoin a Pleiad of personal Testimonies to the Sacred Volume in question.

LORD BACON.

"There never was found in any age of the world either philosopher, or sect, or law, or discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian Faith."

SELDEN.

"There is no book, upon which we can rest in a dying moment, but the Bible."

SIR MATTHEW HALE.

"There is no book like the Bible, for excellent wisdom, learning, and use."

MILTON.

"There are no songs comparable to the Songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the Prophets, and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach."

THE HON. ROBERT BOYLE.

"It is a matchless volume: it is impossible we can study it too much, or esteem it too highly."

LOCKE.

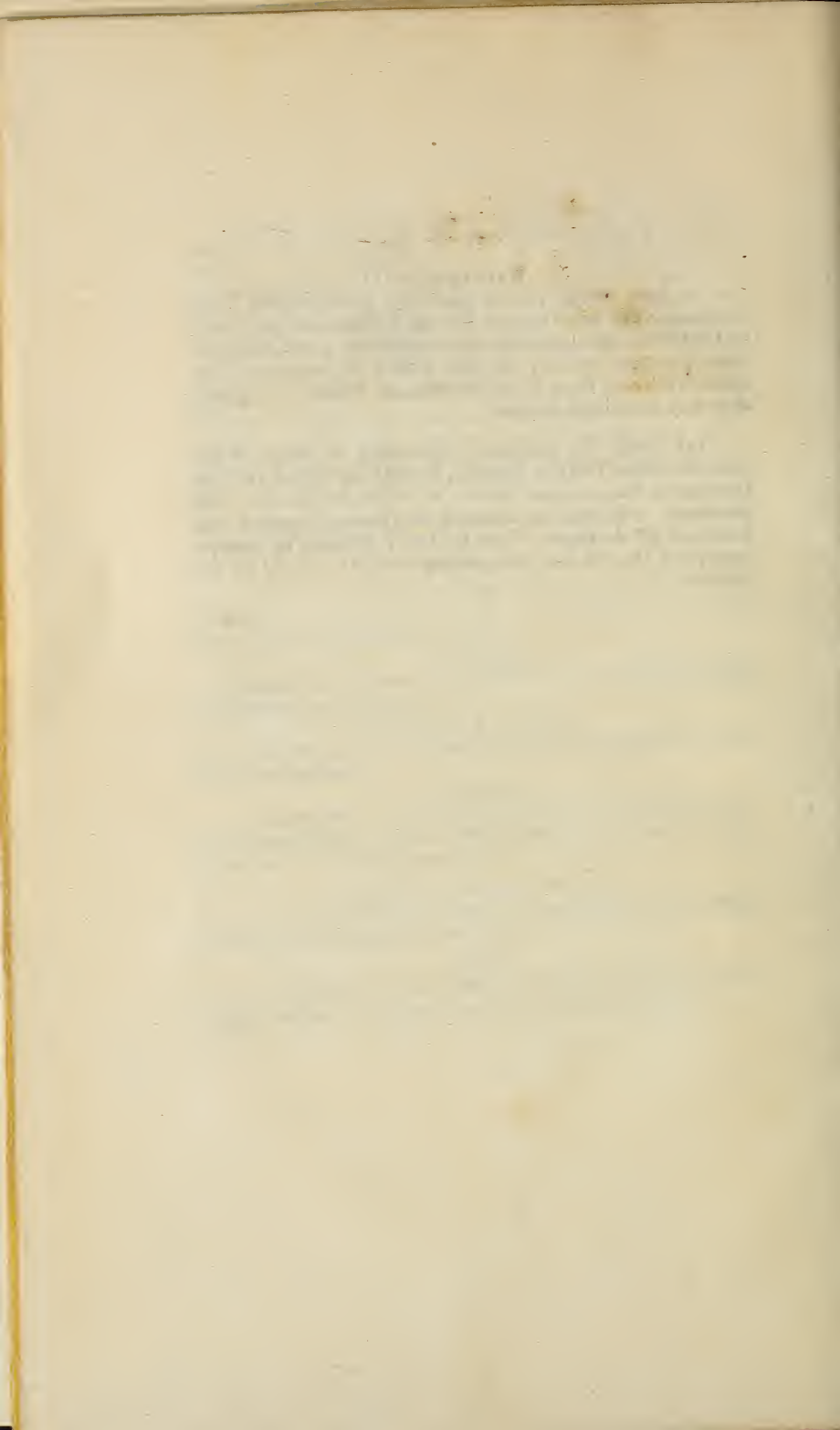
"It hath God for it's Author, Salvation for it's end, and Truth without any mixture of error for it's matter."

Sir WILLIAM JONES.

"I have carefully, and regularly, perused these Holy Scriptures; and am of opinion that the Volume (independently of it's divine origin) contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written".

Let these, the unbiassed conclusions of Seven of the most illustrious English Laymen, be duly contrasted with the frivolous or blasphemous levities of vulgar Scepticism; and the reader will find no difficulty in choosing between the *blackness of darkness*, which the latter offers to his acceptance, and *the life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel*.

F. W.



REASONS
OF THE
CHRISTIAN'S HOPE;
ABRIDGED
FROM THE CONCLUSION OF
Dr. LELAND'S
View of the Principal Deistical Writers,
OF ENGLAND,
OF THE
SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES.

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

I know, in whom I have believed.

(2 Tim. 1. 12.)

[Only Fifty Copies on Demy 8vo.]

1820,

ADVERTISEMENT.



The learned and luminous Dr. J. LELAND ably refuted the infidel sophistries of Tindal, Morgan, Mr. Henry Dodwell, and Lord Bolingbroke as they successively made their appearance. His reply to Tindal's 'Christianity as Old as the Creation' was first published in two volumes, 8vo. in 1733. Four years afterward, he gave consecutively to the world (in two volumes, 8vo., also) his 'Divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted,' in answer to the false reasonings of Morgan's 'Moral Philosopher.' These works justly procured for him marks of the highest respect from the most eminent Members of the Established Church. In 1744 he exposed, in two Letters separately printed, Dodwell's anonymous and disingenuous pamphlet entitled, 'Christianity not founded on Argument;' and, in 1753, came out his 'Reflexions upon the late Lord Bolingbroke's Letters On the Study and Use of History. &c.'

After having thus vanquished the principal Anti-Christian Authors in single combat, he proceeded in 1754 to attack them collectively in his admirable 'View of the principal Deistical Writers' of England, of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries; in which he gave not only a short analysis and exposure of their several schemes as far as the cause of Revelation was concerned, but also an account of their most able antagonists, and a valuable Appendix of Reflexions, which has supplied the substance of the subjoined Tract. In this performance, beside giving a compressed summary of his precious productions, he examines the specious and illogical statements of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Hobbes, Charles Blount, Mr. Toland, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Antony Collins, Woolston, Chubb, the Authors of 'The Resurrection of Jesus considered,' and 'Deism fairly stated and fully vindicated,' and finally (in a Supplement, published in 1756) the three last Volumes of Bolingbroke's Works, which had then recently been edited by Mallet, and the Philosophical Essays of Mr. Hume. Of these two elegant and insidious writers the first, in addition to the attempt made in his 'Letters on History' against God's moral attributes, &c. had proceeded even to question the immortality of the soul and a future state of retribution; and the latter, in his 'Essay on Miracles,' had endeavoured to shake one of the main pillars of Christianity.

Dr. Leland, after providentially recovering from a violent fever when he was upward of seventy years old, had the happiness of being spared to complete, in two Volumes, 4to. his last and greatest labour entitled, 'The Advantage and the Necessity of the Christian Revelation, &c.'; and died in 1766, at the age of seventy-five.

A Collection of his 'Sermons' was subsequently published in four volumes, 8vo.

F. W

February 14, 1820.

A TRACT, &c.



DEISTS may be divided, principally, into two classes. They are either such as, taking it for granted that Christianity has been proved to be an imposition, reject it at a venture; or at most acquiesce in some slight objections, and contenting themselves with general clamours against 'priestcraft' and 'imposture,' never think of examining the evidences and nature of the religion itself: or, they are such as pretend to reject Christianity, because after what they deem due examination, they conceive that they have discovered in it marks of falsehood. There is ground to apprehend, that the greater part of our modern Deists are of the former description. But few are willing to own, that this is their case. Whether they have really made a free and diligent inquiry, or not, they would be thought to have done so, and not to have rejected the Christian revelation without good reasons.

Of this sort professedly are those, who have appeared among us under the character of Deistical Writers. They have made a show of attacking Christianity by argument. But, though never writers expressed a greater admiration of themselves and contempt of others, it may truly be affirmed that, taking them generally, they have had little to support their vain-glorious pretensions: that no writers ever acted a part more disingenuous: that, while they have set up for advocates of Natural Religion in opposition to Revealed, many of them have endeavoured to subvert the main articles even of Natural Religion itself, and have used arguments which, if correct, would banish all religion out of the world: that they have often put on a show of great regard for genuine Christianity, whilst at the same time they have used their utmost efforts to subvert it's authority: that instead of exhibiting it fairly as it is, they

have by misrepresentation and abuse treated the Holy Scriptures in a manner which would not have been endured, if put in practice against other ancient writings of any reputation whatever: that, with regard to the extraordinary attestations of Christianity, they have advanced principles, which would be accounted absolutely ridiculous if applied to other facts, and which really tend to destroy the credit of all past facts altogether: and, finally, that never were there writers more inconsistent with themselves and with one another, or more obviously tainted with obstinate prepossessions and prejudices. Now should not all this naturally create suspicions with respect to the goodness of a cause, which stands in need of such management? And yet it is to be apprehended, that many of those who laugh at others for relying upon their Christian teachers, are ready to resign themselves implicitly to their own Deistical guides, and to admit even their illiberal jests and indecent sarcasms as arguments not to be gainsaid!

Of the objections, which have created some of the strongest prejudices against Christianity, several are such as cannot be properly urged against it with any appearance of reason at all. Such are those drawn from the abuses and corruptions which have been introduced contrary to it's original design, or from the ill conduct of many of it's professors and ministers. For whilst the doctrines of the Gospel, as taught by Christ and his Apostles and delivered in the Scriptures, may be demonstrated to be of a most admirable nature and tendency, and the truth of it's facts is sufficiently established, the reason for embracing it still holds good: and to reject what is in itself excellent, because of abuses and corruptions, which (as some of it's very adversaries acknowledge) are not justly chargeable upon it, is a conduct irreconcilable with the dictates of good sense. The same observation may be made with regard to the objection drawn from it's not having been universally promulgated. For if the evidences brought to prove that it is a divine revelation are valid, then it's not having been made known to all mankind can never prove the contrary. To assert this, indeed, would be to argue from a thing, the reasons of which we do not know, against the truth and certainty of a thing which we do

know, and of which we are able to bring sufficient testimony.

The only objections therefore, fairly adducible against Christianity, are either those which tend to show that the attestations given to it's Facts are not to be depended upon, or those by which it is evinced from the Nature of the Revelation itself, that it is unworthy of God. And, accordingly, both these have been attempted. But whosoever will impartially consider the writings of the Deists, and compare them with those of their opponents, will find how little the former have advanced on either of these heads, that is really to the purpose.

The Facts attesting Christianity carry in them such manifest proofs of supernatural interposition, that few, if any, have ever owned the truth of those facts, and yet denied the divine origin of the Gospel-revelation. Those facts, therefore, it's adversaries have chiefly laboured to discredit. But it has been clearly shown, that the evidence produced in their favour is at least as great as could reasonably be expected for any past facts whatsoever; that never was there any evidence, all things considered, more worthy of belief; and that the accounts of it have been transmitted to us by a conveyance for sureness and uninterruptedness hardly to be paralleled. To all this, little has been opposed, except unproved charges of fraud, or general remarks upon the inconclusiveness of moral evidence and the uncertainty of human testimony!

As to the arguments urged against Christianity from the Nature of the Revelation itself, these must relate either to it's Doctrines, or to it's Laws. Now, with respect to the latter, it cannot reasonably be denied, that it's Moral Precepts have a manifest tendency to promote the practice of piety and virtue, and the peace and good order of the world. And they are enforced by motives the most powerful in their operation, and the best fitted to work upon the nature of man. As therefore the moral precepts of Christianity cannot be justly censured, a clamour has been raised against it's Positive Institutions. Yet it has often been proved, that these positive institutions, taken in their primitive purity, are admirably fitted to promote the great end of all religion,

by strengthening our obligations to a holy life. And this some of the most noted Deistical writers have not been able to deny.

The only objection, then, which remains, is against the Doctrines of Christianity. And before this can be properly brought to bear, two things are to be proved:

1. That the Doctrines objected against are doctrines of the original religion taught by Christ and his Apostles, and delivered in the Scriptures; and

2. That these Doctrines, as there taught, are really contrary to reason. For a doctrine may be attended with considerable difficulties and obscurity, and yet may really *not* be contrary to reason. This is, evidently, the case with respect to several important principles of what is called 'Natural Religion.' The difficulty attending any doctrine, from our imperfect capacity of conceiving it, is no satisfactory argument against it's truth, if we have otherwise sufficient evidence to convince us of it's truth; and that evidence is supplied by it's being delivered in a revelation proved to be divine. For to acknowledge a divine revelation to have been given, and yet to receive nothing upon the credit of it, nothing but what we can prove to be true independently of that revelation, is most absurd and inconsistent. It is to pay no greater regard to a thing on account of it's being divinely revealed, than if it had not been revealed at all. In this case, what is said by a person, who cannot be supposed to have been prejudiced in favour of Christianity, appears to be very reasonable; viz. that "when persons have received the Christian Revelation for genuine after sufficient examination of it's external and internal proofs, and have found nothing that makes it inconsistent with itself, nor that is repugnant to any of those divine truths which reason and the works of God demonstrate to them, such persons will never set up reason in contradiction to it on account of things plainly taught but incomprehensible as to their manner of being; if they did, their reason would be false and deceitful; they would cease to be reasonable men.*" And elsewhere, after having observed that we cannot be obliged to believe against reason, he adds, that when a revelation

* Bolingbroke.

has passed through the necessary trials, "it is to be received with the most profound reverence, with the most entire submission, and with the most unfeigned thanksgiving. Reason has exercised her whole prerogative then, and delivers us over to faith. To believe before all these trials, or to doubt after them, is alike unreasonable.*"

Let me then seriously expostulate with the Deist, and beseech him to reflect whether in endeavouring to abolish Christianity he acts a wise and reasonable part; and what is like to be the effect of his conduct, both with regard to Himself, and to the Public.

And, first, with regard to Himself:

Let him consider, that the case now before him is not a matter of mere indifference, or even of small importance. His own most essential interests are nearly concerned. If the Gospel be divine, to reject it will involve him in the greatest guilt, and expose him to the greatest danger. Should it in fact be found, that he has rejected a revelation attested by God himself, that he has poured contempt upon the Saviour of mankind, slighted the authority of his laws and the offers of his grace, despised his gracious promises, and set at nought his awful denunciations—surely he has reason, in that case, to apprehend the severest results of the divine displeasure. Whatever favourable allowances may be made to those who have never heard of the Gospel, or have enjoyed no opportunity of receiving it in it's original purity, it is obvious that such as have had it's evidences plainly laid before them, and yet have shut their eyes against the heavenly light, are in a most perilous condition. And though it may be said, that this is immediately to be understood of those who lived in the age when it was first published, it yet holds in proportion with respect to those of after-ages. It bears internal marks, indeed, of having been designed by God for the blessing of all ages; and accordingly he has provided that both it's doctrines and laws, and an account of the supernatural attestations given to it, should be transmitted downward in the most satisfactory manner. The obligation therefore incumbent upon all, to whom it is made known, to receive

* Bolingbroke.

and submit to it, and consequently the guilt of rejecting it, still subsists.

Examine the Revelation itself. Could you possibly expect a Revelation given for nobler purposes, than to instruct us to form the most worthy notions of the divine perfections, to set before us the whole of our duty in it's just extent, to state to us the terms of our acceptance with God, and to assure us of his readiness to restore us to his favour upon our unfeigned repentance? Could you possibly expect a Revelation containing precepts more pure, or enforced by weightier motives, or more judiciously adapted to promote the cause of virtue and righteousness? Or could any Revelation, supposing a Revelation really given, be attended with more illustrious attestations? The accounts of the miracles wrought are accompanied with a degree of evidence sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced mind, an evidence which must be admitted except all past facts are to be disbelieved, and which in any other case you would not yourselves hesitate to admit. If it contains some doctrines attended with difficulties relating to things which surpass our comprehension, it cannot be denied that there are also several things in philosophy which the wisest and most acute of scholars think it reasonable to believe, though they are liable to perhaps inexplicable objections.*

With some, alas! it is to be feared, the true reason for rejecting the gospel is their hostility to it's laws. *This is the condemnation*, said our Saviour, *that light is come into the world; but men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* This, however, is to make the very excellence of the Gospel a reason for rejecting it. The best of men in all ages have owned the necessity of keeping the appetites and passions within proper bounds. And such is the great design of the Christian law. Yet it's precepts are not carried to an unreasonable degree of rigour: it allows those appetites and passions to be gratified within the bounds of

* Hume himself asserts, "that no priestly dogmas ever shocked common sense so much as the infinite divisibility of matter, with it's consequences."—Yet this has not hindered the ablest mathematicians from believing it to be demonstrably true. And he gives some other instances of the like kind.

temperance and innocence. A life, indeed, led in conformity to the gospel, would assuredly be the most delightful life in the world. It tends to improve and enlarge the social affections, to inspire universal benevolence, to render men useful in every relation, and to control the baleful feelings of envy, hatred, and revenge, which carry torment and bitterness in their very nature. It inculcates a rational piety and devotion toward God, produces an entire resignation to his will, and refreshes and cheers the soul with a consciousness of the divine approbation. To this add the joys arising from all the wonders of divine goodness, the charms of redeeming love, the glorious promises of the new covenant, the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, and the transporting prospects which are opened before us—a blessed resurrection, and immortal life! Oh! of what valuable privileges, what divine satisfactions, does the Deist deprive himself by his infidelity! And what has he in exchange, but perplexing doubts and gloomy prospects, and (what he will hardly perhaps be able, under any circumstances, entirely to dismiss from his mind) anxious forebodings, marring all the comfort and tranquillity of life!

And what must, in all probability, be the consequences of such conduct with regard to the Public? There are great complaints of a dissoluteness of manners, which seems to be growing among us. In this, the interests of the community are very deeply concerned. When once corruption spreads through society, it must necessarily be attended with a perversion of all order, and sap the very foundation of the general glory and happiness. For, in proportion as vice prevails, it produces a neglect of honest industry; trade consequently decays, fraud and violence increase, the reverence of oaths is lost, and all the ties which bind mankind together are in danger of being dissolved. Machiavel himself has decided, that 'a free government cannot be long maintained, when once a people are become generally corrupt.' Every true friend, therefore, of public order and liberty must wish that the vicious appetites and passions of mankind may be kept under proper control. And nothing so well answers this end as religion.

Without it's influence, indeed, civil laws would be found feeble restraints : nor was there ever any civilised government, which did not adopt religion for it's support.* Now it may easily be proved, that no religion is so well fitted for answering all these purposes as the Christian. Mr. Hume himself, speaking of the received notion, that "the Deity will inflict punishments on vice and bestow rewards on virtue," says that "those who attempt to disabuse men of such prejudices, may for aught he knows be good reasoners, but he cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians; since they free men from one restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of equity and society in one respect more easy and secure." And Bolingbroke, in his remarks on those who 'contrived religion for the sake of government,' observes that "they saw the public external religion would not answer their end, nor enforce effectually the obligations of virtue and morality, without the doctrine of future rewards and punishments." That doctrine, he adds, "has so great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and to restrain the vices of men, that reason, which (as he pretends) cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it on principles of good policy." Nay, he even goes so far as to say, that "if the conflict between virtue and vice in the great com-

* Lord Bolingbroke observes, that "the good effects of maintaining and the bad effects of neglecting religion, were extremely visible in the whole course of the Roman government.—That though the Roman religion established by Numa was very absurd, yet by keeping up an awe of superior power, and the belief of a Providence ordering the course of events, it produced all the marvellous effects which Machiavel (after Polybius, Cicero, and Plutarch) ascribes to it." And he adds, that "the neglect of religion was a principal cause of the evils, which Rome afterward suffered. Religion decayed, and the state decayed with her." If then even a false religion, by 'keeping up an awe of superior power and the belief of a Providence,' had so advantageous an influence on the prosperity of the state, and the 'neglect of religion' brought such evils upon it; can these writers possibly be regarded as true friends to the public, who take so much pains to subvert a religion established upon the most solid foundations, and to set men loose from 'the awe of superior power and the belief of a Providence ordering the course of events,' and whose obvious object and endeavour is to leave us without any religion at all?

monwealth of mankind was not regulated by religious and civil institutions, human life would be intolerable."

What real good to mankind therefore, I may justly ask, can the Deist propose by endeavouring to degrade the ministry and the ordinances of Christianity, to subvert it's divine authority, and thus to destroy it's influence on the consciences of mankind? Can he hope to benefit the cause of virtue, by taking away those motives which most forcibly engage men to the practice of it? Or can he imagine that he shall best check licentiousness, by removing it's most powerful restraints? If it be difficult to contról human corruption, even with all the aids which religion supplies, what might be expected, if men were left to gratify their passions without any such aid at all? Surely then, however unfavourable to Christianity the private sentiments of the Deist may be, he ought for the sake of the public to conceal them, if he would approve himself a true lover of his country; and not, on the contrary, take pains to propagate principles, which in their consequences must have the worst influence on it's comfort and welfare. If what Lord Bolingbroke asserts is true, that "no religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as the Christian religion, considered as taught by Christ and his Apostles;" with what consistency can that man pretend to a concern for the general happiness, who uses his utmost efforts to subvert it by representing it's most important motives to virtue as idle bugbears?

Let me now address myself to those, who profess to value themselves upon the name of Christians; a name expressive of the most sacred obligations, the most valuable privileges, and the most sublime hopes. But of little advantage will be the name, without the true spirit and practice, of Christianity. And it is impossible for any friend of mankind to observe without grief, what numbers there are who would take it ill not to be accounted Christians, that yet seem little disposed to act suitably to that glorious character.

Many nominal Christians, indeed, scarcely ever bestow a serious thought upon those things, which it is the great design of the Gospel to inculcate. How incon-

sistent is this conduct? To profess to believe that God has sent his Son from Heaven with disclosures of the highest interest, in which our everlasting salvation is at stake, and yet to discard these things from their thoughts, and to prefer the veriest trifles before them! Surely no pretence of worldly business, though it is our duty to be diligent in it, can justify such a flagrant neglect. Much less will a hurry of diversions be admitted as a sufficient excuse. And yet how many are there, whose time is taken up in petty amusements, and who make what, at any rate, should only be the entertainment of a vacant hour the occupation of their lives! It is to be lamented, that this is too often the case with persons distinguished by their birth, fortunes, and figure in the world. But can reasonable creatures persuade themselves, that by such a trifling away of their time they answer the end, for which the noble powers of reason were bestowed upon them? Much less can Christians believe, that they were formed for no higher purposes. How often are the duties of the church and the closet, those of the social relations, the care of children and of families, and kind offices toward the indigent and the afflicted, postponed for the sake of low indulgences; an immoderate pursuit of which tends, even when it is least hurtful, to produce a disinclination to serious thought, and to impair the relish for every thing truly excellent and improving!

But too often, alas! what are called 'diversions' lay snares for innocence, and open the way to scenes of dissoluteness and debauchery! Too often what is termed 'play' is carried to such an excess as to squander fortunes, which might be employed to the most valuable purposes! To which may be added, it's natural tendency to excite unworthy passions, and to produce the habits of fraud and falsehood and an illiberal thirst of gain.

Without actual observation one would scarcely think there could be persons, who profess to acknowledge the divine authority of the Gospel, and yet live in an habitual neglect of it's public worship. There never was, assuredly, an institution more wisely calculated for advancing the interests of virtue, than that of

setting apart one day in a week for the express purpose of instructing the people in the knowledge of their duty, and exhorting them to the practice of it; and yet many, who still however call themselves Christians, seem to affect an open disregard or even contempt of it. But it is not easy to conceive, what reasonable pretence can be alleged for such a conduct. Will they aver, that they deem it a reflexion upon their sense, to pay their public homage to their Creator and Redeemer; and to make an open profession of their regard for that religion, which yet they would be thought to believe? Or, have they such an aversion from the exercises of religion, that the spending of an hour or two in solemn acts of adoration, in prayer and thanksgiving, is a weariness which they cannot endure? What is this, but to avow the great degeneracy of their minds, and their want of a proper disposition for the employment which best deserves the attention of reasonable beings? Or, do they affect a high regard for moral virtue, as an excuse for neglecting positive institutions? And will any man, who knows the true state of things among us, take upon himself to declare that the growing neglect of the ordinances of religion has helped to promote the practice of virtue; or that men's morals are generally improved, since they became more indifferent to those sacred solemnities? Nothing is more evident to any one, who impartially considers the nature of those ordinances and solemnities, than that a due observance of them (beside being a public avowal of our faith in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ) has a manifest tendency to exercise and strengthen in us those good affections, which naturally lead to a holy life.

But there are also Christians, on the other hand, who seem to flatter themselves that a mere outward attendance on these ordinances will be alone sufficient, though they at the same time indulge themselves in habits contrary to the rules of virtue and morality. All expedients, however, for reconciling the practice of dissoluteness or dishonesty with the faith and hope of the Gospel are obviously absurd. The most inconsistent of all characters is, a wicked Christian; which, to any one acquainted with the true nature of Christianity, must

appear to be a contradiction in terms. For nothing can be more evident, than that a vicious life is the most manifest contradiction to the whole design of the Gospel. To profess to hope for salvation from the Redeemer, and yet to neglect the necessary terms, without which (we are assured) salvation is not to be obtained! To believe that he came to destroy the works of the Devil, and yet to allow themselves in those very works! What an unamiable representation would such persons afford of the Gospel, if a judgement were to be formed of it from their conduct! You would perhaps conceive a horror at the thought of blaspheming Christ, and openly renouncing all hope of salvation from him: and yet the plain tendency of your practice is, to harden the hearts of infidels, and *give occasion* to the enemies of Christianity to *blaspheme*. And should not you tremble to think of being charged as accessory to the indignities cast upon that dread name into which you were baptized, and on that excellent system, the divine origin of which you profess to believe? Surely it highly concerns you, for your own sakes and that of the Gospel, instantly to set about reforming a conduct irreconcilable at once to all the rules of reason, and to your own most evident interests. Implore the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and the assistances of his grace, which shall not be wanting to the truly penitent; and show yourselves to be Christians by endeavouring to get your souls effectually brought under the influence of that religion, the natural tendency of which is to inspire ingenuous hope, and confidence, and joy.

I shall conclude, with laying a few advices before those who take upon them the name of Christians, and who profess to receive the Gospel as of divine authority.

1. And, first, let us be thankful to God for our glorious privileges. It is our unspeakable advantage, that we are not left to the uncertain light of our own unassisted reason in a matter of such importance. We have God himself instructing us by his word concerning his perfections and his providence, displaying all the riches of his grace toward perishing sinners, setting our duty

before us in it's just extent, animating us to the practice of it by *exceeding great and precious promises*, and assuring us of the aids of his Holy Spirit to assist our weak endeavours. A happiness is provided for us, as the result of our *patient continuance in well-doing*, transcending all that we are now able to express, or even to conceive. These things certainly call for every return of love and gratitude within our power. Our civil liberties are justly to be valued; but our privileges, as Christians, are of a far loftier and nobler character.

2. A natural consequence of this is, that we should treasure the faith which we profess, and endeavour to make ourselves well acquainted with it, as it is contained in the Holy Scriptures. *There* are to be found those discoveries, which God was pleased to make of his will *at sundry times and in divers manners* by the mouth of his holy prophets; and *there* is that last and most perfect Revelation, which he gave by his well-beloved Son. The very discourses of that Son are there transmitted to us, with an account of his wonderful works, his pure life, and his most perfect example. Let us, therefore, *search the Scriptures*, which are *able to make us wise unto salvation*. And if we meet with difficulties in them, as may justly be expected in ancient writings relating to a great variety of matters (some of them of a most extraordinary nature) let not this discourage us. For beside that by carefully examining the Holy Volume, and making a proper use of the helps afforded us, we may have many of those difficulties cleared up, it must be observed that the things most necessary to be known are most plainly revealed; and those are the things, which we should especially labour to get impressed upon our consciences and our hearts.

But it should be our principal concern, that our *whole conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ*. He must be an utter stranger to Christianity, who is not sensible that it both enjoins, and in the highest degree encourages, a virtuous practice. Let us therefore, as we would secure our own salvation and advance the glory of our Blessed Redeemer, endeavour to adorn it's doctrines by a 'godly, righteous,

and sober life.' A mere *form of godliness* will not be sufficient: the energy and beauty of religion must appear in our whole temper and demeanour. And oh! how amiable is the idea of a Christian acting up to the obligations of Christianity!

Consider him in the exercise of piety and devotion toward God, diligent in attending on the ordinances of religion, filled with a profound reverence and devout admiration of the Supreme Excellence, his soul at one time rising in grateful emotions to his sovereign Benefactor, at another exercising an unrepining submission to his will and a steady dependence on his providence, and always rejoicing in Christ Jesus as his Saviour, in the wonders of his love and the beauties of his example.

But the religion of a real Christian is not confined to immediate acts of devotion. It animates his whole conduct. It teaches him to be strictly just and honest, to behave suitably in the conjugal, the parental, and the filial relation, and to fulfil all the duties of civil and social life. It tends to suppress the malevolent affections, and to diffuse a sweetness and complacency throughout his whole behaviour. It makes him ready to bear with the infirmities of others, to rejoice in their happiness and endeavour to promote it, and instead of being *overcome of evil, to overcome evil with good*. Behold him in another view, as exercising a noble self-government, keeping his appetites and passions under a regular subjection to the laws of reason and morality, disdaining to defile himself with vicious excesses; yet partaking at the same time, with moderation and gratitude, of the innocent enjoyments of life, and having every enjoyment heightened by the glorious prospects before him. To which it may be added, that religion inspires him with a true sense of honour, as signifying an abhorrence of every thing base and impure, and with a constancy and fortitude not to be bribed or terrified from the path of duty.

Such a character, in every condition, as far as it has an opportunity of exerting itself, cannot but attract universal approbation. But when it is found in con-

junction with nobility of extraction, dignity of station, and affluence of fortune, what a glory does it diffuse!

It may be observed, in the last place, that those who have a true zeal for Christianity, are bound by every obligation to endeavour to promote it in their families, by carefully training up their children to an early acquaintance with it's doctrines and it's precepts. It is of the utmost consequence to inspire the tender mind with a reverence for things sacred, a love of virtue, and an abhorrence of baseness and impurity. The necessity of a pious education, and the benefits arising from it, have been acknowledged by the best and wisest of men in all ages. And great in this respect is the advantage of those, who enjoy the light of the Gospel-revelation. Hence it highly concerns Christian parents, to labour that their children may have the word of Christ dwelling richly in them. Young minds, thus filled with the great objects of religion, possess the most effectual preservative against the vanities and follies of a sinful world, and the most animating motives to the practice of every thing amiable and good. And for want of such an indispensable preparation it is, that many among us, though bearing the name of Christians, are shamefully ignorant even of the first elements of Christianity. Is it to be wondered at, if such persons become an easy prey to seducers, and are speedily drawn into infidelity and debauchery, losing at once every noble sentiment and every generous affection? And in that case, the higher their condition, the more pernicious is the contagion of their example. Instead of being the ornament and the support, indeed, they become the disgrace and the pest of the community.

On the contrary, how agreeable is it to behold children bred up in the fear of God, their minds carefully stored with sound principles and good habits! Those of the one sex, not only formed under the influence of religion to a delicate sense of purity and virtue, and to that gentleness of manners and behaviour, which has always been esteemed their loveliest ornament, but also to the hope of an immortal inheritance: and those of the other trained up by proper discipline to a rational piety, the due government of their appetites and

passions, and a manly sense of whatever is honourable and excellent! In short, *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,—thinking on these things!*

THE
TRUTH
OF THE
SCRIPTURE HISTORY;

ABRIDGED FROM
MR. LESLIE'S
SHORT AND EASY METHOD WITH THE DEISTS;
AND HIS
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY DEMONSTRATED.

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

Let all the nations be gathered together, and all the people be assembled: Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, "IT is truth."—Isa. xliii. 9.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

“ IN the former of these Tracts the argument is so short and clear, that the meanest capacity may understand it, and so forcible that no man has yet been found able to resist it. When it was first published, some attempts were made ; but they soon came to nothing. It is, briefly, this. The Christian Religion consists of facts and of doctrines, each depending on the other ; so that, if the facts are true, the doctrines also must be true. Thus, for example, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact ; our resurrection is a doctrine : admit the fact, and the doctrine cannot be denied. The Ascension of Jesus Christ is another fact ; his return to judge the world is a doctrine : if the fact is true, the doctrine must be so likewise. For (argues an Apostle) if the doctrine is not true, the fact must be false : *if the dead rise not, then is not CHRIST raised.*”

Now, the facts are here established by Four incontrovertible Marks.

The above is extracted from the Rev. W. Jones' Preface to his edition of the Tract in question ; and what that excellent man has farther recorded, upon the authority of the late Dr. Berkeley, on the subject of Dr. Middleton's persevering hostility to this publication, ought not to be omitted :

“ Feeling how necessary it was to his principles, that he should some way rid himself of Mr. Leslie's argument, he looked out for some false facts, to which these four Marks might be applied ; and this he did for twenty years together, without being able to find one.”

With regard to the history of the Author, a brief narrative may suffice. He was the son of a Bishop of Clogher, of a good Scotch family ; and, as Chancellor of the Diocese of Connor, rendered himself highly obnoxious to the Irish papists by his ardent and able disputations. Want of sympathy in religion, however, did not alienate his allegiance from his infatuated Sovereign (James II.) upon his abdication ; and he, accordingly, lost all his preferments at the Revolution.

He afterward joined the Pretender in France, and accompanied him into Italy, with a view of converting him to Protestantism! But finding his endeavours ineffectual, and his treatment less cordial than he had a right to expect, he returned to Ireland, where he died in 1722. Two folio volumes were the result of his controversial labours.

His second Tract contains Four additional Marks, "such as no other facts but those of Christ, how true soever, (not even those of Moses) either have had, or can have." The former set establish the evidence of the Christian Religion, the latter exhibit it's glory.

"To those (to adopt Mr. Jones' closing observations) who take this little volume into their hands, I have only the following short advice to give. I beseech them to remember that, if Christianity be true, it is tremendously true. All the great things, which this world can show, are as nothing in comparison of it. Heaven and Hell are the issue. It's facts, yet to come, are as certain as those that are past. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, (1 Cor. xv. 52.); the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt away with fervent heat (2 Pet. iii. 10.); the angels shall gather together the elect of Christ from the four winds (Matt. xxiv. 31.); and every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Rom. xiv. 12.) A man must be stupified, if he can think on these things without fleeing from the wrath to come: and there is no way but in the belief of Christianity, which this book teaches."

In the alterations, which I have made in these Tracts, I have laboured to divest the argument of all extraneous matter; in order to render more obvious both it's continuity and it's conclusiveness; and thus to gain for it the attention of those, whom a larger pamphlet might have deterred from the perusal. The accomplishment of my object may, perhaps, be inferred from the fact, that Twelve Editions of Ten Thousand Copies each have been recently circulated in different parts of the British Empire.

F. W.

June 11, 1820.

SHORT AND EASY METHOD,

&c.

 DEAR SIR,

“ You are desirous, (you inform me) to receive from me some one topic of reason, which shall demonstrate the truth of the Christian Religion, and at the same time distinguish it from the impostures of MAHOMET and the Heathen Deities : that our Deists may be brought to this test, and be obliged either to renounce their reason and the common reason of mankind, or to admit the clear proof from reason of the Revelation of CHRIST ; which must be such a proof as no imposture can pretend to, otherwise it will not prove Christianity not to be an imposture.” And “ you cannot but imagine (you add) that there must be such a proof, because every truth is in itself one : and therefore one reason for it, if it be a true reason, must be sufficient ; and, if sufficient, better than many : because multiplicity creates confusion, especially in weak judgements.”

Sir, you have imposed a hard task upon me ; I wish I could perform it. For, though every truth be one, yet our sight is so feeble that we cannot always come to it directly, but by many inferences and layings of things together. But I think that, in the case before us, there is such a proof as you desire, and I will set it down as shortly and plainly as I can.

I suppose then, that the truth of the Christian Doctrines will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact recorded of Christ in the Gospels are proved to be true ; for his miracles, if true, establish the truth of what he delivered. The same may be said, with regard to Moses. If he led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, and did such other wonderful things as are recorded of him in the book of Exodus, it must necessarily follow that he was sent by God : these being the strongest evidences we can require, and which every Deist will confess he would admit, if he himself had witnessed their performance. So that the stress of this cause will depend upon the proof of the matters of fact.

With a view, therefore, to this proof I shall proceed,

1. To lay down such Marks, as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that where they all meet, such matters of fact cannot be false ; and,

2. To show that they all do meet in the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ ; and do not meet in those reported of Mahomet and of the Heathen Deities, nor can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever.

1. The Marks are these :

(1.) That the fact be such, as men's *outward senses* can judge of ;

(II.) That it be performed *publicly* in the presence of witnesses ;

(III.) That there be *public monuments and actions* kept up in memory of it ; and,

(IV.) That such monuments and actions be established and commence *at the time of the fact*.

The two first of these Marks make it impossible for any false fact to be imposed upon men at the time, when it was said to be done, because every man's senses would contradict it. For example :—Suppose I should pretend that yesterday I divided the Thames, in the presence of all the people of London, and led the whole city over to Southwark on dry land, the water standing like a wall on each side. It would be morally impossible for me to convince the people of *London*, that this was true ; when every man, woman, and child could contradict me, and affirm

that they had not seen the Thames so divided, nor been led over to Southwark on dry land. I take it, then, for granted (and, I apprehend, with the allowance of all the Deists in the world) that no such imposition could be put upon mankind at the time, when such matter of fact was said to be done.

‘ But the fact might be invented, when the men of that generation, in which it was said to be done, were all past and gone ; and the credulity of after-ages might be induced to believe, that things had been performed in earlier times, which had not !’

From this the two latter Marks secure us, as much as the two first in the former case. For whenever such a fact was invented, if it were stated that not only public monuments of it remained, but likewise that public actions or observances had been kept up in memory of it ever since ; the deceit must be detected by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions or observances had ever taken place. For example :—Suppose I should now fabricate a story of something done a thousand years ago, I might perhaps get a few persons to believe me ; but if I were farther to add, that from that day to this every man at the age of twelve years had a joint of his little finger cut off in memory of it, and that (of course) every man then living actually wanted a joint of that finger, and vouched this institution in confirmation of it’s truth. It would be morally impossible for me to gain credit in such a case, because every man then living could contradict me, as to the circumstance of cutting off a joint of the finger ; and that, being an essential part of my original matter of fact, must prove the whole to be false.

2. Let us now come to the second point, and show that all these Marks do meet in the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ ; and do not meet in those reported of Mahomet and of the Heathen Deities, nor can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever.

As to Moses, he (I take it for granted) could not have persuaded six hundred thousand men, that he had brought them out of Egypt by the Red Sea, fed them forty years

with miraculous manna, &c. if it had not been true: because the senses of every man, who was then alive, would have contradicted him. So that here are the two first Marks.

For the same reason, it would have been equally impossible for him to have made them receive his Five Books as true, which related all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. Observe, how positively he speaks to them (*Deut. xi. 2—8.*) “And know you this day, for I speak not with your children, which have not known and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles;—but your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did,” &c. Hence we must admit it to be impossible that these Books, if written by Moses in support of an imposture, could have been put upon the people who were alive at the time, when such things were said to be done.

‘But they might have been written in some age after Moses, and published as his!’

To this I reply that, if it were so, it was impossible they should have been received as such; because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time (*Deut. xxxi. 24—26.*) and state that a copy of them was likewise deposited in the hands of the king, “that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them.” (*Deut. xvii. 19.*) Here these Books expressly represent themselves as being not only the civil history, but also the established municipal law of the *Jews*, binding the king as well as the people. In whatever age, therefore, after Moses they might have been forged, it was impossible they should have gained any credit; because they could not then have been found either in the ark, or with the king, or any where else: and, when they were first published, every body must know that they had never heard of them before.

And they could still less receive them as their book of statutes, and the standing law of the land, by which they had all along been governed. Could any man at this day

invent a set of Acts of Parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation, as the only book of statutes which they had ever known? As impossible was it for these Books, if written in any age after Moses, to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, viz. the municipal law of the Jews; and for any man to have persuaded that people, that they had owned them as their code of statutes from the time of Moses, that is, before they had ever heard of them! Nay more—they must instantly have forgotten their former laws, if they could receive these Books as such; and as such only could they receive them, because such they vouched themselves to be. Let me ask the Deists but one short question, “Was a book of sham-laws ever palmed upon any nation, since the world began?” If not, with what face can they say this of the law-books of the Jews? Why will they affirm that of them, which they admit never to have happened in any other instance?

But they must be still more unreasonable. For the Books of Moses have an ampler demonstration of their truth, than even other law-books have: as they not only contain the laws themselves, but give an historical account of their institution and regular fulfilment: of the Pass-over, for instance, in memory of their supernatural protection, upon the slaying of the first-born of Egypt; the Dedication of the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast; the preservation of Aaron’s Rod which budded, of the pot of Manna, and of the brazen Serpent, which remained till the days of Hezekiah (2 *Kings* xviii. 4.) &c. And, beside these memorials of particular occurrences, there were other solemn observances, in general memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, &c.; as their annual Expiations, their New-Moons, their Sabbaths, and their ordinary sacrifices: so that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily recognitions of these things. The same Books likewise farther inform us, that the tribe of Levi was appointed and consecrated by God as his Ministers, by whom alone these institutions were to be celebrated; that it was death for any others to approach the altar; that their High-Priest wore a brilliant mitre and magnificent robes, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in

his breast-plate ; that at his word all the people were to go out, and to come in ; that these Levites were also their judges, even in all civil causes, &c.

Hence therefore also, in whatever age after Moses they might have been forged, it was impossible they should have gained any credit : unless, indeed, the fabricators could have made the whole nation believe, *in spite of their invariable experience to the contrary*, that they had received these Books long before from their fathers ; had been taught them when they were children, and had taught them their own children ; that they had been circumcised themselves, had circumcised their families, and uniformly observed their whole minute detail of sacrifices and ceremonies ; that they had never eaten any swine's flesh, or other prohibited meats ; that they had a splendid tabernacle, with a regular priesthood to administer in it (confined to one particular tribe) and a superintendent High-Priest, whose death alone could deliver those that had fled to the cities of refuge ; that these priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters, &c.—But this would surely have been impossible, if none of these things had been practised ; and it would consequently have been impossible to circulate, as true, a set of Books which affirmed that they had practised them, and upon that practice rested their own pretensions to acceptance. So that here are the two latter Marks.

‘ But (to advance to the utmost degree of supposition) these things might have been practised, prior to this alleged forgery ; and those Books only deceived the nation, by making them believe that they were practised in memory of such and such occurrences, as were then invented !’

In this hypothesis (however groundless) the same impossibilities press upon our notice, as before. For it implies, that the Jews had previously kept these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing why they kept them ; whereas, in all their particulars, they strikingly express their original : as the Passover, instituted in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, when he slew the first-born of Egypt, &c.

Let us admit however, contrary both to probability and to matter of fact, that they did not know why they kept

these observances ; yet was it possible to persuade them, that they were kept in memory of something, which they had never heard of before ? For example :—Suppose I should now forge some romantic story of strange things done a long while ago : and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to convince the Christian world, that they had regularly from that period to this kept holy the first day of the week in memory of such or such a man, a Cæsar or a Mahomet ; and had all been baptized in his name, and sworn by it upon the very book which I had then fabricated (and which, of course, they had never seen before) in their public courts of judicature ; that this book likewise contained their law, civil and ecclesiastical, which they had ever since his time acknowledged, and no other. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could be received as the Gospel of Christians, or not ?—The same reason holds, with regard to the books of Moses ; and must hold with regard to every book, which contains matters of fact accompanied by the above-mentioned Four Marks. For these Marks conjunctively secure mankind from imposition, with regard to any false fact, as well in after-ages, as at the time when it was said to be done.

Let me produce, as an additional and familiar illustration, the Stonehenge of Salisbury-Plain. Almost every body has seen, or heard of it ; and yet nobody knows by whom, or in memory of what, it was set up.

Now suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and state in it that these huge stones were erected by a Cæsar or a Mahomet, in memory of such and such of their actions : and should farther add, that this book was written at the time when those actions were performed, and by the doers themselves or by eye-witnesses ; and had been constantly received as true, and quoted by authors of the greatest credit in regular succession ever since : that it was well known in England, and even enjoined by Act of Parliament to be taught our children ; and that we accordingly did teach it our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children :—would this, I demand of any Deist, pass current in England ? or rather should not I, or any other person who might insist upon

it's reception, instead of being believed be sent to Bedlam?

Let us compare then this rude structure with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or "twelve stones" set up at Gilgal. (*Josh.* iv. 6.) It is there said, that the reason why they were set up was that, when the children of the Jews in after ages should ask their meaning, it should be told them (iv. 20—22.) And the thing, in memory of which they were set up (the passage over Jordan) was such, as could not possibly have been imposed upon that people at the time, when it was said to be done; it was not less miraculous, and from the previous notice, preparations, and other striking circumstances of it's performance (iii. 5. 15.) still more unassailable by the petty cavils of infidel sophistry, than their passage through the Red Sea.

Now, to form our argument, let us suppose that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan; that these stones at Gilgal had been set up on some unknown occasion; and that some designing man in an after-age invented this book of Joshua, affirmed that it was written at the time of that imaginary event by Joshua himself, and adduced this Stonage as a testimony of it's truth. Would not every body say to him, "We know the Stonage very well, but we never before heard of this reason for it, nor of this book of Joshua; where has it lain concealed all this while? And where and how came you, after so long a period, to find it? Besides, it informs us that this passage over Jordan was solemnly directed to be taught our children, from age to age; and, to that end, that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of this particular monument: but we were never taught it ourselves, when we were children, nor did we ever teach it our children. And it is in the highest degree improbable, that such an emphatic ordinance should have been forgotten, during the continuance of so remarkable a pile of stones, set up expressly for the purpose of preserving it's remembrance."

If then, for these reasons, no such fabrication could be put upon us, as to the Stonage in Salisbury-Plain; how much less could it succeed, as to the Stonage at Gilgal?

If, where we are ignorant of the true origin of a mere naked monument, such a sham origin cannot be imposed, how much less practicable would it be to impose upon us in actions and observances, which we celebrate in memory of what we actually know; to make us forget, what we have regularly commemorated; and to persuade us, that we have constantly kept such and such institutions with reference to something, which we never heard of before; that is, that we knew something, before we knew it! And, if we find it thus impossible to practise deceit, even in cases which have not the above Four Marks, how much more impossible must it be, that any deceit should be practised in cases, in which all these Four Marks meet!

In the matters of fact of Christ likewise, as well as in those of Moses, these Four Marks are to be found. The reasoning indeed, which has been already advanced with respect to the Old Testament, is generally applicable to the New. The Miracles of Christ, like those of Moses, were such as men's *outward senses* could judge of; and were performed *publicly*, in the presence of those to whom the Gospel-history of them, was addressed. And it is related, that "about three thousand" at one time (*Acts* ii. 41.) and "about five thousand" at another (iv. 4.) were converted in consequence of what they themselves saw achieved in matters, where it was impossible that they should have been deceived. Here, therefore, were the two first Marks.

And, with regard to the two latter, Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as memorials of certain things, not in after-ages, but *at the time* when these things were said to be done; and have been strictly observed, *from that time to this*, without interruption. Christ himself, also, ordained Apostles, &c. to preach and administer his Sacraments, and to govern his church "even unto the end of the world." Now the Christian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact amongst us, as the tribe of Levi were among the Jews; and as the era and object of their appointment are part of the Gospel-narrative, if that narrative had been a fiction of some subsequent age, at the time of it's fabrication no such

order of men, deriving themselves from such an origin, could have been found; which would have effectually given the lie to the whole story. And the truth of the matters of fact of Christ being no otherwise asserted, than as there were at that time (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to have been fabricated) not only public Sacraments, but likewise a public clergy of his institution to administer them, and it being impossible upon this hypothesis that there could be any such things then in existence, we must admit it to be equally impossible that the forgery should have been successful. Hence it was as impossible to have deceived mankind, in respect to these matters of fact, by inventing them in after-ages, as at the time when they were said to be done.

The matters of fact, reported of Mahomet and of the Heathen Deities, do all want some of these Four Marks, by which the certainty of facts is established. Mahomet himself, as he tells us in his Koran (vi. &c.) pretended to no miracles; and those, which are commonly related of him, pass even among his followers for ridiculous legends, and as such are rejected by their Scholars and Philosophers. They have not either of the two first Marks; for his converse with the moon, his night-journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to Heaven, &c. were not performed before any witnesses; nor was the tour, indeed, of a nature to admit human attestation: and to the two latter they do not even affect to advance any claim.

The same may be affirmed, with little variation, of the stories of the Heathen Deities; of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's transforming himself into a bull, &c. beside the absurdity of such degrading and profligate adventures. And accordingly we find, that the more enlightened Pagans themselves considered them as fables involving a mystical meaning, of which several of their writers have endeavoured to give us the explication. It is true, these Gods had their priests, their feasts, their games, and other public ceremonies: but all these want the fourth Mark, of commencing *at the time* when the things, which they commemorate, were said to have been done. Hence they cannot secure mankind in subsequent

ages from imposture, as they furnish no internal means of detection at the period of the forgery. The Bacchanalia, for example, and other heathen festivals, were established long after the events to which they refer; and the priests of Juno, Mars, &c. were not ordained by those imaginary Deities, but appointed by others in some after-age to their honour, and are therefore no evidence of the truth of their preternatural achievements.

To apply what has been said.

We may challenge all the Deists in the world to show any fabulous action, accompanied by these Four Marks. The thing is impossible. The histories of the Old and New Testament never could have been received, if they had not been true; because the priesthoods of Levi and of Christ, the observance of the Sabbath, the Passover, and Circumcision, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, &c. are there represented as descending uninterruptedly from the times of their respective institution. And it would have been as impossible to persuade men in after-ages, that they had been circumcised or baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, and celebrated Passovers, Sabbaths, and Sacraments under the ministration of a certain order of priests, if they had done none of those things; as to make them believe at the time, without any real foundation, that they had gone through seas on dry land, seen the dead raised, &c. But, without such a persuasion, it was impossible that either the Law or the Gospel could have been received. And the truth of the matters of fact of each being no otherwise asserted, than as such public ceremonies had been previously practised, their certainty is established upon the FULL CONVICTION OF THE SENSES OF MANKIND.

I do not say that every thing, which wants these Four Marks, is false; but that every thing, which has them all, must be true.

I can have no doubt that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, that he conquered at Pharsalia, and was killed in the Senate-house; though neither his actions, nor his assassination, are commemorated by any public observances. But this shows, that the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ, have come down to us better certi-

fied than any other whatsoever. And yet our Deists, who would consider any one as hopelessly irrational that should offer to deny the existence of Cæsar, value themselves as the only men of profound sense and judgement, for ridiculing the histories of Moses and of Christ, though guarded with infallible marks which that of Cæsar wants.

Besides, the nature of the subject would of itself lead to a more minute examination of the one, than of the other : for of what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there ever were such a man as Cæsar ; whether he conquered at Pharsalia, and was killed in the Senate-house, or not ? But our eternal welfare is concerned in the truth of what is recorded in the Scriptures ; and therefore they would naturally be more narrowly scrutinised, when proposed for acceptance.

How unreasonable, then, is it to reject matters of fact so important, so sifted, and so attested ; and yet to think it absurd, even to madness, to deny other matters of fact—which have not the thousandth part of their evidence, have had comparatively little investigation, and are of no consequence at all !

THE
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY,

&c

To the preceding Four Marks, which are common to the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ, I now proceed to subjoin Four additional Marks ; the three last of which no matter of fact, how true soever, either has had or can have, except that of Christ.

This will obviously appear, if it be considered,

(V.) That the Book, which relates the facts, *contains likewise the laws* of the people to whom it belongs ;

(VI.) That Christ was previously announced, for that very period, by a long train of *Prophecies* ; and,

(VII.) Still more peculiarly prefigured by *Types*, both of a circumstantial and a personal nature, from the earliest ages ; and, lastly,

(VIII.) That the facts of Christianity are such, as to make it impossible for either their relators or hearers to believe them, if false, without supposing an *universal deception of the senses of mankind*.

5. The *fifth* Mark, which has already been discussed, renders it (as was above observed) impossible for any one to have imposed such a book upon any people. For example:—Suppose I should forge a code of laws for Great Britain, and publish it next term : could I hope to persuade the judges, lawyers, and people that this was their genuine statute-book, by which all their

causes had been determined in the public courts for so many centuries past? Before they could be brought to this, they must totally forget their established laws, which they had so laboriously committed to memory and so familiarly quoted in every day's practice; and believe that this new book, which they had never seen before, was that old book which had been placed so long in Westminster-Hall, which has been so often printed, and of which the originals are now so carefully preserved in the Tower.

This applies strongly to the books of Moses, in which not only the history of the Jews, but likewise their whole law secular and ecclesiastical, was contained. And though, from the early extension and destined universality of the Christian system, it could not without unnecessary confusion furnish an uniform civil code to all its various followers, who were already under the government of laws in some degree adapted to their respective climates and characters, yet was it intended as the spiritual guide of the new Church. And in this respect the fifth Mark is still stronger with regard to the Gospel, than even to the Books of Moses; inasmuch as it is easier (however hard) to imagine the substitution of an entire statute-book in one particular nation, than that all the nations of Christendom should have unanimously conspired in the forgery. But without such a conspiracy such a forgery could never have succeeded, as the Gospel universally formed a regular part of their daily public offices.

But I hasten to the *sixth* Mark, of Prophecy.

6. 'The great fact of Christ's coming was previously announced to the Jews, in the Old Testament, "by all the holy Prophets, which have been since the world began." (*Luke* i. 70.)

The first promise upon the subject was made to Adam, immediately after the Fall. (*Gen.* iii. 15. Compare *Col.* ii. 15. and *Heb.* ii. 14.)

He was again repeatedly promised to Abraham, (*Gen.* xii. 3. xviii. 18. and xxii. 18., applied *Gal.* iii. 16.) to Isaac (*Gen.* xxvi. 4.), and to Jacob. (*Gen.* xxviii. 14.)

Jacob expressly prophesied of him, under the appellation of "Shiloh," or *him that was to be sent.* (*Gen.* xlix.

10.) Balaam also, with the voice of inspiration, pronounced him "the Star of Jacob, and the Sceptre of Israel." (*Numb.* xxiv. 17.) Moses spake of him, as One "greater than himself." (*Deut.* xviii. 15. 18, 19, applied *Acts* iii. 22.) And Daniel hailed his arrival, under the name of Messiah the Prince." (ix. 25.)

It was foretold, that he should be born of a virgin (*Isa.* vii. 14,) in the city of Bethlehem, (*Mic.* v. 2.) of the seed of Jesse (*Isa.* xi. 1. 10.)—that he should lead a life of poverty and suffering (*Psal.* xxii.) inflicted upon him, not "for himself," (*Dan.* ix. 26.) but for the sins of others (*Isa.* liii.) and, after a short confinement in the grave, should rise again (*Psal.* xvi. 10, applied *Acts* ii. 27. 31. and xiii. 35—37.)—that he should "sit upon the throne of David for ever, and be called the mighty God," (*Isa.* ix. 6, 7.) "the Lord our Righteousness," (*Jer.* xxxiii. 16,) "Immanuel, that is, God with us," (*Isa.* vii. 14, applied *Matt.* i. 23.) and by David himself, whose son he was according to the flesh, "Lord" (*Psal.* cx. 1, applied to Christ by himself, *Matt.* xxii. 44, and by Peter, (*Acts* ii. 34.)

The time of his incarnation was to be, before "the Sceptre should depart from Judah" (*Gen.* xlix. 10.) during the continuance of the second Temple (*Hagg.* ii. 7. 9.) and within Seventy Weeks, or 490 days, i. e. according to the constant interpretation of prophecy, 490 years from it's erection. (*Dan.* ix. 24.)

From these and many other predictions, the coming of Christ was at all times the general expectation of the Jews; and that it had ripened into full maturity, at the time of his actual advent, may be inferred from the number of false Messiahs, who about that period made their appearance.

That he was, likewise, the expectation of the Gentiles (in conformity to the prophecies of *Gen.* xxix. 10. and *Hagg.* ii. 7, where the terms "People," and "Nations," denote the Heathen world) is evinced by the coming of the wise men from the East, &c.; a story, which would, of course, have been contradicted by some of the individuals so disgracefully concerned in it, if the fact of their arrival,

and the consequent massacre of the infants * in and about Bethlehem, had not been fresh in every one's memory : by them, for instance, who afterward suborned false-witnesses against Christ, and gave large money to the soldiers to conceal (if possible) the event of his resurrection ; or them, who in still later days every where zealously spoke against the tenets and practices of his rising Church.

All over the east, indeed, there was a general tradition, that *about that time a king of the Jews would be born, who should govern the whole earth*. This prevailed so strongly at Rome, a few months before the birth of Augustus, that the Senate made a decree to expose all the children produced that year ; but the execution of it was eluded by a trick of some of the senators, who from the pregnancy of their wives were led to hope that they might be the fathers of the promised Prince †. It's currency is also recorded, with a remarkable identity of phrase, by the pens of Suetonius ‡ and Tacitus §. Now that in this there was no collusion between the Chaldeans, Romans, and Jews, is sufficiently proved by the desperate methods suggested, or carried into effect, for it's discomfiture. Nor, in fact, is it practicable for whole nations of contemporary (and still less, if possible, for those of successive) generations, to concert a story perfectly harmonious in all it's minute accompaniments of time, place, manner, and other circumstances.

* This is alluded to by Macrobius, who relates Augustus' Greek pun upon the occasion in a language, in which it entirely loses it's point ; *Cum audisset inter pueros, quos in Syriâ Herodes rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoque ejus occisum ; ait, " Melius est Herodis porcum esse, quam filium,"* (Saturn. II. 4.) i. e. *ἢ νῦν*, " It is better to be Herod's swine than his son ;" on account of the abstinence of the Jews from that animal.

† —*regem populo Romano Naturam parturire : senatum exterritum censuisse, Ne quis illo anno genitus educaretur ; eos qui gravidas uxores haberent, quo ad se quisque spem traheret, curâsse ne senatus consultum ad ærarium deferretur.* (Suet. Aug. 94.)

‡ *Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis ut eo tempore Judæâ profecti rerum potirentur.* (Suet. Vesp. 4.)

§ *Pluribus persuasio inerat antiquis sacerdotum libris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judæâ rerum potirentur.* (Tac. Hist. v. 13.)

In addition to the above general predictions of the coming, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, there are others which foretell still more strikingly several particular incidents of the Gospel-narrative; incidents unparalleled in the whole range of history, and which could have been foreseen by God alone. They were, certainly, not foreseen by the human agents concerned in their execution; or they would never have contributed to the fulfilment of prophecies referred even by themselves to the Messiah, and therefore verifying the divine mission of him, whom they crucified as an impostor.

Observe, then, how literally many of these predictions were fulfilled. For example, read *Psal. lxi. 21*. "They gave me gall to eat, and vinegar to drink;" and compare *Matt. xxvii. 34*. *They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall.*—Again, it is said, *Psal. xxii. 16—18*. "They pierced my hands and my feet—they stand staring and looking upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture *;" as if it had been

* The soldiers did not tear his coat, because it was *without seam, woven from the top throughout*; and, therefore, they *cast lots for it*. But this was entirely accidental. With the passage in the Psalms, as Romans, they were not very likely to be acquainted. The same remark applies to the next instance, from Zechariah.

And here it may be suggested (in reply to those, who insidiously magnify "the power of chance, the ingenuity of accommodation, and the industry of research," as chiefly supporting the credit of obscure prophecy) that greater plainness would enable wicked men, as free agents, to prevent its accomplishment, when obviously directed against themselves. The Jews, not understanding what Christ meant by his "lifting up" (*John viii. 28. xii. 32, 33.*) and not knowing that he had foretold his crucifixion to his Apostles (*Matt. xx. 19.*) instead of finally stoning him—the death appointed by their law (*Levit. xxiv. 16.*) for blasphemy (*Matt. xxvi. 65.*), more than once menaced against the Saviour (*John viii. 59. x. 33.*), and actually inflicted upon Stephen, (*Acts vii. 58.*) for that offence—unconsciously delivered him to the predicted Roman cross. Again, the piercing of his side was no part of the Roman sentence, but merely to ascertain his being dead, previously to taking him down from the cross; "that the body might not remain there on the Sabbath-day," which commenced that evening a few hours after the crucifixion. From his early *giving up the ghost*, however, it was not necessary that "a bone of him should be broken," (*Exod. xii. 46. Numb. ix. 12. Psal. xxxiv. 20.*) like those of the two thieves, his fellow-sufferers. (*John xix. 32, 36.*)

written after *John* xix. 23, 24. It is said likewise, *Zech.* xi. 10. "They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced;" and we are told, *John* xix. 34, that *one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, &c.*

Compare also *Psal.* xxii. 7, 8. "All they, that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out their lips and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he will have him—with *Matt.* xxvii. 39. 41. 43. *And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Come down from the cross. Likewise also the Chief-priests mocking him, with the Scribes and Elders, said, He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God.* His very price and the mode of laying out the money, previously specified, *Zech.* xi. 13. are historically stated, in perfect correspondence with the prophet, *Matt.* xxvii. 6, 7. And his riding into *Jerusalem* upon an ass, predicted *Zech.* ix. 9. (and referred, by one of the most learned of the Jewish Rabbies, to Messiah) is recorded by the same inspired historian, *xxi.* 9. Lastly, it was foretold that "he should make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," (*Isa.* liii. 9;) and this, rightly translated*, was precisely verified by the very improbable incidents of his being crucified *between two thieves* (*Matt.* xxvii. 38.) and afterward *laid in the new tomb of the rich man of Arimathea.* (ib. 57. 60.)

Thus do the prophecies of the Old Testament, which had been constantly in the keeping of those bitter enemies of Christianity, the Jews, distinctly and harmoniously refer to the person and character of Christ. His own predictions, in the New, demand a few brief observations.

Those relating to the destruction of Jerusalem, which specified that it should be "laid even with the ground," and "not one stone left upon another" (*Luke* xix. 44.)

* This passage, which in the common translation inverts the circumstances of Christ's passion, is by Dr. Lowth rendered perfectly agreeable to them; "And his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb."

before " that generation passed" (*Matt. xxiv. 34.*), were fulfilled in a most surprisingly-literal manner, the very foundations of the temple being ploughed up by Turnus Rufus. In another remarkable prophecy he announced the many false Messiahs, that should come after him, and the ruin in which their followers should be involved (*Matt. xxiv. 25, 26.*): and that great numbers actually assumed that holy character before the final fall of the city, and led the people into the wilderness to their destruction, we learn from JOSEPHUS. (*Antiq. Jud. xviii. 12. xx. 6, and B. J. viii. 31.*) Nay, such was their wretched infatuation, that under this delusion they rejected the offers of Titus, who courted them to peace. (*B. J. vii. 12.*)

It will be sufficient barely to mention his foretelling the dispersion of that unhappy nation, and the triumph of his Gospel over *the gates of hell*, under every possible disadvantage; himself low and despised, his associates only twelve (and those illiterate and unpolished), and his adversaries the allied powers, prejudices, habits, interests, and appetites of mankind.

7. But the *seventh* Mark is still more peculiar (if possible) to Christ, than even that of Prophecy. For whatever may be weakly pretended with regard to the oracular predictions of Delphi or Dodona, the Heathens never affected to prefigure any future event by Types or resemblances of the fact, consisting of analogies either in individuals, or in sensible institutions directed to continue till the anti-type itself should make it's appearance.

These types, in the instance of Christ, were of a two-fold nature, circumstantial and personal. Of the former kind (not to notice the general rite of sacrifice*) may be produced, as examples; 1. The Passover appointed in memory of that great night when the Destroying Angel, who "slew all the first-born of Egypt," passed over those houses, upon whose door the blood of the Paschal Lamb

* Among the heathen posterity of Noah likewise the principle, that 'evil was to be averted by vicarious atonement,' was traditionally preserved: witness the self-devotion of Curtius and the Decii, and the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the son of the king of Moab. (*2 Kings iii. 27.*)

was sprinkled ; and directed to be eaten with (what the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* v. 7, 8, calls) “ the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 2. The annual Expiation, in two respects : first, as the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies (representing Heaven, *Exod.* xxv. 40. *Wisd.* ix. 8. *Heb.* ix. 24.) with the blood of the sacrifice, whose body was burnt without the camp—“ wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” (*Heb.* xiii. 12.) ; and, “ after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right-hand of God” (x. 12.) : and, secondly, as “ all the iniquities of the children of Israel were put upon the head” of the Scape-goat. (*Lev.* xvi. 21.) 3. The brazen Serpent, by looking up to which the people were cured of the stings of the fiery serpents ; and whose “ lifting-up” was, by Christ himself, interpreted as emblematical of his being lifted up on the cross. (*John* iii. 14.) 4. The Manna, which represented “ the bread of life, that came down from heaven.” (*John* vi. 31—35.) 5. The Rock, whence the waters flowed to supply drink in the wilderness ; “ and that rock was Christ.” (1 *Cor.* x. 4.) 6. The Sabbath, “ a shadow of Christ” (*Col.* ii. 16, 17.) ; and, as a figure, of his eternal rest, denominated “ a sign of the perpetual covenant.” (*Exod.* xxxi. 16, 17. *Ezek.* xx. 12. 20.) And lastly, to omit others, 7. The Temple, where alone these shadowy sacrifices were to be offered, because Christ (“ the body”) was to be offered there himself*.

Of personal types likewise, I shall confine myself to such, as are so considered in the New Testament :

1. Adam, between whom and Christ a striking series

* Hence the sin of the Jews (so often mentioned in the Old Testament) in that the *high-places*, where they used to sacrifice illegally were not taken away. (1 *Kings* xv. 14. xxii. 43. 2 *Kings* xii. 3. xv. 4. 35, &c.) But they were removed by Hezekiah (2 *Kings* xviii. 4.) and the people directed to worship and burn incense at Jerusalem only. (2 *Chron.* xxxii. 12. *Isai.* xxxvi. 7.)

Hence too by the expatriation of the Jews, and the destruction of “ their city and sanctuary” (predicted to take place soon after the death of the Messiah (*Dan.* ix. 26, 27.), they have now “ no more sacrifice for sins.” (*Heb.* x. 26.) : for, when *that which was perfect was come, that which was in part was done away*. The types ceased, when the anti-type appeared.

of relations is marked, *Rom.* v. 12. to the end, and *1 Cor.* xv. 45—49. 2. Noah, who “ saved by water: the like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (*1 Pet.* iii. 20, 21.) 3. Melchisedec, king of Salem, who was made “ like unto the Son of God, a priest continually.” (*Heb.* vii. 3.) 4. Abraham, “ the heir of the world” (*Rom.* iv. 13.), “ in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed.” (*Gen.* xviii. 18.) 5. Isaac, in his birth and intended sacrifice, “ whence * also his father received him in a figure” (*Heb.* xi. 19.), i. e. of the resurrection of Christ. He, too, was the promised seed (*Gen.* xxi. 12. and *Gal.* iii. 16.) “ in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.” (*Gen.* xxii. 18.) 6. Jacob, in his vision of the ladder (*Gen.* xxviii. 12, and *John* i. 51.), and his wrestling with the angel; whence he, and after him the Church, obtained the name of ‘ Israel.’ (*Gen.* xxvii. 24., and *Matt.* xi. 12.) The Gentile world, also, like Jacob (i. e. a supplanter, *Gen.* xxvii. 36.) gained the blessing and heirship from their elder brethren the Jews. 7. Moses (*Deut.* xviii. 18, and *John* i. 45.), in redeeming the children of Israel out of Egypt. 8. Joshua (called also Jesus, *Heb.* iv. 8.), in acquiring for them the possession of the Holy Land, and as Lieutenant to “ the Captain of the host of the Lord.” (*Josh.* v. 14.) 9. David (*Psal.* xvi. 10. and *Acts* ii. 25—35.), upon whose throne Christ is said to sit (*Isaiah* ix. 7.), and by whose name he is frequently designated (*Hos.* iii. 5, &c.) in his pastoral, regal, and prophetic capacity. And, 10. Jonah, in his dark imprisonment of three days, applied by Christ to himself. (*Matt.* xii. 40.)

8. The *Eighth* and last Mark is, That the facts of Christianity are such, as to make it impossible for either the relators or the hearers to believe them, if false, without supposing an universal deception of the senses of mankind.

For they were related by the doers, or by eye-witnesses, to those who themselves likewise either were or might have been present (and, undoubtedly, knew many that

* Moriah likewise, the scene of the enjoined oblation, is supposed to have been Mount Calvary.

were present) at their performance ; to this circumstance, indeed, both Christ and his Apostles often appeal. And they were of such a nature, as wholly to exclude every chance of imposition. What juggler could have given sight to him, “ that was born blind ;” have fed five thousand hungry guests with “ five loaves and two fishes ;” or have raised one, who had been “ four days buried,” from his grave ?

When then we add to this, that none of the Jewish or Roman persecutors of Christianity, to whom it’s first teachers frequently referred as witnesses of those facts, ever ventured to deny them ; that no apostate disciple, under the fear of punishment or the hope of reward (not even the artful and accomplished Julian himself), ever pretended to detect them : that neither learning nor ingenuity, in the long lapse of eighteen hundred years, have been able to show their falsehood ; though, for the first three centuries after their promulgation, the civil government strongly stimulated hostile inquiry : and that their original relators, after lives of unintermitted hardship, joyfully incurred death in defence of their truth—we can scarcely imagine the possibility of a more perfect, or more abundant, demonstration.

It now rests with the Deists, if they would vindicate their claim to the self-bestowed title of Men of Reason, to adduce some matters of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, possessing evidence superior or even similar to those of Christ. This however, it must at the same time be observed, would be far from proving the matters of fact of Christ to be false ; but certainly, without this, they cannot reasonably assert that their own facts alone, so much more unfavourably circumstanced with regard to testimony, are true.

Let them, therefore, produce their Cæsar, or their Mahomet,

(I.) Performing a fact, of which men’s *outward senses* can judge.

(II.) *Publicly*, in the presence of witnesses ;

(III.) In memory of which *public monuments and actions* are kept up,

(IV.) Instituted and commencing *at the time of the fact* :

(V.) Recorded likewise in a set of books, addressed to the identical people before whom it was performed, and containing their *whole code of Civil and Ecclesiastical law* ;

(VI.) As the work of one, previously announced for that very period by a long train of *Prophecies*,

(VII.) And still more peculiarly prefigured by *Types*, both of a circumstantial and a personal nature, from the earliest ages ; and, lastly,

(VIII.) Of such a character, as made it impossible for either the relators or hearers to believe it, if false, without supposing an *universal deception of the senses of mankind* :—

Again—Let them display in it's relators, themselves too eye-witnesses of the fact, the same proofs of veracity, evinced by an equally-patient endurance of distress and death in it's support ; and in some doctrine founded upon it (as unpopular in it's outset, and in it's progress as little aided by arms, or learning, or oratory, or intrigue) the same triumph over the united prejudices and passions of mankind :—

Finally—Let them exhibit among it's believers (unbiassed by any supposed professional partiality) the minutely-investigating spirit of a Boyle, the profound understanding of a Locke, the dispassionate reason of an Addison, the discriminating judgement of a Hale, the sublime intellect of a Milton, and the only-not-divine sagacity of a Newton :—

OF LET THEM SUBMIT TO THE IRRESISTIBLE CERTAINTY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

THE END.

THE
EVIDENCES
OF
CHRISTIANITY;

ABRIDGED FROM

DR. DODDRIDGE'S

Three Sermons

UPON THAT SUBJECT.

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

We have not followed cunningly-devised fables."

(2 Pet. 1. 16.)

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To prefix any notice to a Work, which issued originally from the pen of one so justly revered by all classes of Christian society as Dr. Doddridge, would appear (and, if it were merely in the way of panegyric, would justly appear) as superfluous, as it would be

——“to gild refined gold.”

To all Readers, however, it may not be historically known that the Three admirable Discourses, which have furnished the materials of the following pages, were on their first publication in 1736 combined with seven others; and that at the particular request of one of the highest Dignitaries of the Established Church, who thought it most desirable that they should be thrown into the widest possible circulation, they were subsequently printed in a separate form.

Our adversaries, it has been truly observed, never trouble themselves to examine the Evidences of Religion, but take all their knowledge of it from a few objections casually stated in light conversation. The true reasoner seeks for evidence, before he listens to objections. Secure of the first, he is not easily shaken by the latter.

“It gave the Author (says his respectable Biographer, Mr. Orton) singular pleasure to know, that those Sermons were the means of convincing two gentlemen of a liberal education and distinguished abilities, who had been Deists, that Christianity was true and divine: and one of them, who had set himself strenuously to prejudice others against the evidence and contents of the Gospel, became a zealous preacher and an ornament of the religion he had once denied and despised.”

It cannot be otherwise than satisfactory to add, that they are made the subject of study and examination in one of the two principal Colleges in the University of Cambridge.

Their excellent and lamented Writer died at Lisbon, whither he had gone for the recovery of his health, in 1751, in the fiftieth year of his age: but by his Works, “though dead, he yet speaketh.”

F. W.

February 28, 1820.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

IN WHICH ARE CONTAINED THE
MOST IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING
CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS REIGN
FROM HIS MARRIAGE TO HIS DEATH

BY JOHN HUME

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

Printed by J. B. Smith, at the ...

THE
EVIDENCES
 OF
 CHRISTIANITY, &c.

THE object of this short Tract is, to give a summary view of the most considerable arguments in favour of Christianity in their proper and natural connexion, which must furnish better grounds of judgement than could possibly be supplied by any number of detached remarks, or by a more copious enlargement upon any single branch of the subject. And may God prepare the understanding of the reader to receive these things, and strengthen his memory to retain them; that he may not be like a child *tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and the cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive!*

I. FIRST, then, it must appear highly probable, if we take the matter merely in theory, that a system resembling that of the Gospel in doctrine and in precepts, should be a divine revelation : because,

1. THE state of mankind, at the period of it's introduction, was such as greatly to need a revelation ;

2. THERE seems to be encouragement, from the light of nature, to hope that God would grant one ;

3. AND that so introduced and transmitted, as we are told Christianity was ;

4. AND in substance, generally, what we find Christianity to be.

THESE four particulars, if established, not only afford strong presumptive evidence, that 'the Gospel is from God;' but also open a fair way for the more direct proof, arising from external evidence, of the same proposition.

1. It is an easy thing, to pronounce florid encomiums on the perfection of natural light ; but if we appeal to the sure

authority of facts, it cannot be denied that the whole heathen world has lain, and still *lieth, in wickedness*: that nothing is so wild as not to have been believed, nothing so infamous as not to have been practised by them; and that even in Christian, nay, in Protestant countries, we find a too general ignorance or forgetfulness of God, coupled with debauchery, fraud, oppression, pride, ambition, and avarice; whence we may judge, whether or not a Revelation be an unnecessary thing. And,

2. THAT it is in itself a possible thing with Him, with whom *all things are possible*, it is as idle to assert, as it would be impious to deny. But *would* such a Being, it may be asked, deem it proper to confer upon his creatures such a favour; gifted as they already are with faculties and opportunities to trace, and with motives to glorify, him as God?

IF we consider him as an indulgent Father, watching tenderly over us and liberally providing us with every thing needful for the support of animal life, especially in the medicinal virtues imparted to many of the productions of nature (which, in a state of perfect rectitude and happiness, we should never have required) we cannot but think it highly probable, that he would at one time or other graciously supply some remedy to heal the diseased mind. This anticipation, indeed, seems perfectly agreeable to the general sentiments of mankind; as may be inferred from the pretences to divine revelation, which have been so frequently fabricated, and so credulously received.

5. THAT a revelation, if actually made, would be so made as we are told Christianity was, may likewise safely be concluded: namely, that it would be taught by some person sent down from a superior world, or distinguished by his eminent wisdom in this; and who would not only teach, but also practise, universal goodness. With this view he would, probably, be involved in a series of distresses, in order to exhibit him as a pattern of the virtues peculiar to adversity; and, finally, by the intervention of the Deity be either rescued from those distresses, or restored from death, if he sunk under them.

NOR is it less likely, that the fellow-labourers of such a person, for the purpose of attracting attention and proving the divinity of their mission, would be endowed with a power of working Miracles—as at once the shortest, the plainest, and the most forcible mode of conviction; especially where an effect is to be produced upon the populace, who form incomparably the greater part of mankind. It is, also, not improbable, that the disclosure of such a Dispensation would be

gradual; and that it's most illustrious Promulgator would be ushered in by some Prophecies, exciting a general expectation of his coming, and manifestly accomplished by it.

WITH respect to it's propagation, after having been thus established at it's outset it would naturally be transmitted, like other important facts, by credible testimony; which, though less convincing than miracles actually wrought before our eyes, may yet rise to such a degree as to exclude all reasonable doubt. And why should we expect the evidence of a Revelation to be so forcible, as universally and irresistibly to compel assent? Is it not, on the other hand, more likely, that it would be such as might indeed give ample satisfaction to the diligent and candid, yet leave room for cavil and objection to the captious inquirer? Such, it is contended, that of Christianity is: and

4. It's main doctrines are (what we might, by anticipation, conclude those of divine revelation would be) rational, practical, and sublime; clearly asserting the chief principles of Natural Religion—the existence, unity, providence, and perfection of God, the essential difference between moral good and evil, our obligations to the various branches of virtue, the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments of a future state.

THAT such a Revelation would however contain some things, which could not have been learned from the highest improvements of natural light, and hint at others which our feeble faculties would not be able fully to comprehend, might reasonably be supposed. Yet even with regard to those, we should anticipate, that they would either lead to new duties, or suggest more powerful motives to the discharge of old ones. And of ceremonial institutions, at least in the more advanced state of the revelation, we should be prepared to find the number few, and the tendency plainly subservient to the great purposes of practical religion.

Now from whom, but from God, could such a Dispensation have proceeded? That so admirable a system of truth and duty should be contrived, or propagated, by the children of wickedness—would be strangely unaccountable: nor can we imagine, that righteous men would have attempted to support the cause of religion by such impious falsehoods, as their pretensions must have been—if they had been falsehoods at all.

WERE the Gospel then only in theory thus probable, there is so much of safety and of comfort in it, that a wise man would deliberately venture all his hopes upon it, though nothing more could be offered for it's confirmation. But,

blessed be God, we can affirm with still greater confidence, upon positive grounds, that

II. CHRISTIANITY is assuredly, and in fact, a divine revelation.

IN order to prove this, we assert,

1. THAT the Books of the New Testament were written by the original preachers and publishers of Christianity: and

2. THAT what they teach carries along with it such evidences of a divine authority, as may justly demand our acceptance.

WITH a view to establish the first of these propositions, we proceed to demonstrate,

1. THAT Christianity is an ancient religion;

2. THAT there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth crucified at Jerusalem about eighteen hundred years ago;

3. THAT the first preachers of his religion wrote books named like those, which now make up the New Testament;

4. THAT those books are preserved in the original to the present times; and,

5. THAT our authorised translation of them may be depended upon, as substantially faithful.

1. THAT above seventeen hundred years ago, there existed a body of men called Christians, may be evinced by referring to the works (still extant) of the Christian writers, who lived in the same or the next age. These by their Exhortations and Apologies render it notoriously certain, that Christianity was then of some standing in the world: and their testimony is confirmed by the invectives of contemporary Jews and Heathens. From Tacitus, the historian, we learn that, 'in the days of the Roman Emperor Nero (who began his reign about twenty years after the death of Christ) there was a vast multitude of Christians, not only in Judæa but at Rome also,' against whom a persecution was raised*; and he plainly intimates, that this was not the first attempt of the kind. Suetonius, in his Memoir of Nero,† asserts the same fact. Pliny, who was employed by Trajan to prosecute the Christians, in his celebrated Letter to that Emperor‡ states, that 'many of both sexes, and of every age and rank, were infected with this *superstition* (as he thinks fit to term it); and that it had penetrated the villages, as well as the cities.' Marcus Antoninus, who wrote a few years after Pliny, mentions the Christians as 'examples of a resolute and obstinate contempt of death:' and it is generally supposed,

* Ann. xv. 44.

† Ner. xvi.

‡ Epist. x. 97.

that they were the Galileans recorded by Epictetus, as 'taught by practice to despise the rage of their armed enemies.'*

It is incontrovertible, therefore, that there were vast numbers of Christians, soon after Jesus of Nazareth is said to have appeared upon earth, who chose to endure the greatest extremities rather than abandon the religion which he had inculcated.

2. Now this could not have been the case, unless they had been well assured, that there was actually such a person as Jesus of Nazareth. Several, indeed, of the authors above-quoted, distinctly assert, that the Christians derived their name from Christ; who, as Tacitus expressly adds,† was 'put to death under Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judæa, in the reign of Tiberius.' The Crucifixion, in truth, is a fact, which our enemies were so far from disowning, that they even gloried in it. The Jews, in some of their earliest subsequent writings, call Jesus 'the man who was hanged;' and the heathen, Lucian, rallies the Christians for having deserted the pompous train of the Pagan deities to worship One, whom he impiously derides as 'a crucified impostor.' A great deal more might be added on this head; but more cannot be necessary, to prove that there was at the period in question such a person as Christ, who professed himself to be a divine teacher, and was followed by numerous disciples.

5. WHAT these disciples saw and heard, it was extremely natural that they should not only declare orally, but also publish in writing: as books, in the age and countries in which they taught, were not uncommon; and a minute acquaintance with the history and doctrines of Christ, was of the utmost consequence to the accomplishment of their mighty object. But we have, fortunately, still more than this strong presumption on the subject.

THE bitterest adversaries of Christianity must grant, that we possess books written from fifteen to seventeen hundred years ago, in which mention is made of the Life of Christ, as drawn up more especially by four of his disciples, called the Evangelists. Great pains, it is true, have been taken to prove that some spurious narratives, also, were anciently current under the names of the Apostles: but surely this proves, at the same time, that some genuine narratives were in circulation; as counterfeit coin implies the previous existence of true money, which it is designed

* Ner. iv. 7.

† Ib.

to represent. The primitive Christians, we know from the ancient Ecclesiastical Writers, sifted these works with scrupulous jealousy: and their justness of discrimination was such, that (as Eusebius, an accurate critic in those early ages, informs us) no doubt was ever entertained of the genuineness of the Four Gospels, the Acts, Thirteen Epistles of Paul, one of Peter, and one of John;* to which the other books of the New Testament were, upon competent authority, subsequently added. These sacred books they universally represent as 'the words of the Spirit,' and as 'the law and the organ of God.' Now surely they were as capable of judging, whether or not a book was written by Matthew, or John, or Paul; as an old Roman could be of determining, whether or not Horace, or Cicero, or Livy, wrote the works which bear their names: especially as, from the infinitely deeper interest of the subject, the former would necessarily take proportionally greater care to avoid being imposed upon by any fictitious story.

4. THERE is not, indeed, any other ancient volume extant, which may so certainly and so easily as the New Testament be proved to be, in substance, what it was on issuing from the hands of its composers. How, in fact, could the New Testament have been corrupted? Received and read from the first in the Christian Temples, as a part of public worship (just as Moses and the Prophets were, in the Jewish Synagogues) it spread with the widening boundaries of the Church, and was quickly made the subject of translations, of which some remain to this day. To suppose it corrupted, therefore, is to suppose that thousands and millions of people came together from distant countries, with their all-but-infinite diversities of language, customs, and sentiments—professedly to corrupt a book acknowledged by them all to be the great charter, by which they held their eternal hopes! The madness of such an hypothesis will appear to be tenfold more extravagant, if we consider the numbers of Heretics who sprung up in the very infancy of the Church, all appealing to this book as the final judge of controversies, and all acting as a perpetual guard upon each other; so that by no one party could it have been adulterated, without incurring instant detection and reprehension from the rest.

WE might also add that, from the very time of the Apostles down to our own, numberless quotations have

* Hist. Eccles. vi. 25.

been made from the New Testament; and a multitude of commentaries in various languages, some of them of ancient date, written upon it: so that, were every copy of the Volume itself lost, it might in a great measure (if not wholly) be recovered from the writings of others. If the quotations, indeed, made from it were to be collected, they would far surpass in bulk all that have ever been made from the whole of the ancient writings now remaining in Europe! Hence any one might more reasonably dispute, whether or not the writings commonly ascribed to Homer, Demosthenes, Virgil, or Cæsar, be in the main what those writers left them; than affect the same doubt with respect to the compositions of the Four Evangelists, or those of Paul, Peter, James, and Jude. I say, 'in the main;' because in the act of transcribing a book, one letter or word may casually be substituted for another. But those Various Readings, as they are called, are generally (it is well known) of very inconsiderable importance.

To complete this part of the argument, it remains for us to show,

5. THAT our authorised version of the New Testament may be depended upon, as substantially faithful. And *that* we shall do, upon the concurrent testimony of persons placed in circumstances, in which it cannot be supposed possible that they should unite to deceive.

ON a diligent examination, then, of the Greek text it may be averred, that the severest criticisms which our translation has at any time encountered, if not totally divested both of integrity and of modesty, have never affected the fundamentals of religion; seldom reaching farther than the beauty of a figure, or the connexion of an argument. It may, indeed, confidently be asserted that, as there is no copy of the original, so neither is there any version of it—ancient, or modern—from which all the principal facts and doctrines of Christianity might not be learned, as far as the knowledge of them is necessary to salvation.

BUT that the reader may *not* be constrained to rely upon our single assertion, we have an advantage in this respect, arising out of what (differently viewed) is our great calamity—I mean, the diversity of our religious opinions. Wherever there is a body of persons dissenting from the National Establishment, who yet agree with the members of that Establishment in the use of the same translation, *there* is satisfactory evidence that such a translation is in the main correct: because, if it were to any considerable extent

corrupted, such dissenters would undoubtedly think themselves bound in conscience to bear a loud testimony against it. Oh! were we equally united in regulating by those same Scriptures our doctrine, our discipline, and our practice!

THE New Testament being thus proved to be genuine, it incontrovertibly follows that,

II. CHRISTIANITY is a Divine Revelation.

UPON this subject the difficulty indeed is, not to discover proofs, but to dispose them so as best to illustrate and strengthen each other. The subjoined may, perhaps, appear to be the most natural series:

1. The Authors of the books of the New Testament were, certainly, capable of judging concerning the truth of the facts which they relate;
2. Their character, as deducible from their writings, renders them worthy of the highest regard;
3. They were under no temptation to propagate their story, if it had been false;
4. And, if they had tried to do so, they would almost infallibly have been detected;
5. Yet we find that they gained credit, and succeeded wonderfully against all opposition;
6. Their story, therefore, must be admitted to be true, and the Gospel of course to be a Divine Revelation;
7. More especially, if we consider what has occurred in various ways to confirm it, subsequently to its first propagation.

1. THE Writers of the New Testament *must* have known whether or not the facts, which they asserted, were true, because they were themselves present when several of the most important of them took place. The language of one of those Writers is—*That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life*, i. e. of Christ and his Gospel—*that declare we unto you.** Surely Matthew and John could not but have known, whether or not they had familiarly conversed with Jesus of Nazareth, witnessed his healing the sick and raising the dead, and themselves received from him miraculous endowments. John in particular informs us, that he actually viewed him expiring on the cross, was en-

* 1 John, i. 1—3.

trusted by him with the care of his afflicted mother, and saw the soldier's spear pierce his side, and an effusion of blood and water follow the wound.* The same may be observed with respect to the modes, by which he ascertained the reality of the Resurrection. Luke likewise must have known, whether or not he was thrown ashore by a shipwreck with Paul, and lodged with him in the house of the governor of the island. Paul must have known, whether or not he saw Christ on the way to Damascus, was struck with blindness, and subsequently on the prayer of a fellow-disciple restored to sight; and received moreover the power, not only of working miracles, but also of conveying the same faculty to others. Lastly, Peter must have known, whether or not he witnessed the Transfiguration, and heard the voice which led him to say, *We have not followed cunningly-devised fables.*

Now Matthew, John, Luke, Paul, and Peter, are by far the most considerable writers in the New Testament: and surely few historians, ancient or modern, have had such excellent opportunities of fathoming the truth of what they have recorded. The Infidel, therefore, can only allege that 'they were impostors;' for, if we for a moment suppose their narrative to be untrue, they could by no means pretend that their mistake was involuntary. They must, in the most criminal sense, be found *false witnesses of God.*† But,

2. Such a charge would be quite at variance with their characters, as deducible from their writings. In them, they appear to have been persons of strong natural sense, and of a composed mind. Let any one peruse the discourses of Christ as reported by the Evangelists, or those of Peter and Paul as preserved in the Acts of the Apostles; and maintain the contrary—if he dare. More especially, let the reader of the New Testament mark what evident proofs it contains of simplicity, integrity, piety, and beneficence; and he will hardly suspect that those, who could write so admirably well, could act so detestably ill as to employ that writing in support of an imposture. For,

(1.) THEIR stile of narration is most happily adapted to gain our belief. Details are often fatal to the dealer in fiction, because they so hazardously widen the ground for scrutiny: but they as certainly help to verify facts. Besides, the sacred story is every where told in the most natural and easy manner. You find in it nothing like design, or artifice;

* John xix. 27, 34.

† 1 Cor. xv. 15.

no harangues, no apologies, no encomiums. Facts are left to speak for themselves. Affecting no *excellency of speech*, the historians of the Gospel determined to know only *Jesus Christ, even Him that was crucified**—a conduct the more to be admired, when we consider that their theme would have supplied them with abundant variety of the most pathetic declamation.

(2.) AND the freedom, with which they record even the humiliating circumstances relating to their Lord and Master, equally vouches for their integrity. They scruple not to own, that his country was infamous, his birth and education low, and his life indigent: that by the rulers he was accused of sabbath-breaking, sedition, and blasphemy, while he was reviled by the populace as a demoniac and a wine-bibber; and at last, through the joint clamours of both, after enduring much terror and agony of spirit, ignominiously executed as one of the vilest of malefactors! With respect to themselves, they admit not only the meanness of their original employments, and in some instances the scandals of their former life; but also their remaining prejudices and errors—their slowness of apprehension, their cowardice, their ambition, their temerity, and their unbelief. Their sole concern obviously is, the true and the simple; *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*†

(3.) NOR are plainness and honesty their only characteristics. In their writings, more particularly the Epistolary parts of the New Testament, we find striking examples of the most devout and generous disposition: and to the workings of that holy temper, which they everywhere display, we may justly ascribe whatever of virtue and goodness are still to be found in the world. In letters especially addressed to intimate friends, to whom the mind naturally opens itself without disguise, if we incidentally discover traits of unaffected benevolence and piety, no candid judge would lightly pronounce them to be counterfeit. And, in proportion to the improbability that the writers of such letters would be guilty of any notorious wickedness, should be the positive evidence of their guilt. Yet, if the testimony of the Apostles was false (since they could not have been mistaken), without any such positive evidence, of such notorious wickedness must they have been guilty—guilty, not in one or two, but in a thousand instances. Their whole life, in effect, must have been one continued scene of perjury.

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

† Ib. i. 24.

AND the inhumanity of their conduct would have been equal to it's impiety; as they must have been consciously beguiling men to venture their entire future happiness on the power and the fidelity of One, whom upon this hypothesis they knew to be an impostor! To have done all this in the face of the most strenuous opposition, thus exposing themselves as well as their duped followers to certain temporal ruin, enhances at once the guilt and the idiotism of the undertaking. It appears, indeed, utterly improbable that any twelve men could have been found—we say not, in Judæa, but in any part of the earth—who would have entered, upon any terms whatever, into so black a confederacy. Can the reader then, more particularly after recollecting what has been above stated respecting the character of the Apostles, in his heart believe twelve such men to have engaged in it?

3. ESPECIALLY, as they could not be under any temptation to do so. Gain and glory must, assuredly, have been equally out of the question. Does it, indeed, look like a contrivance of artful men, to charge their rulers with having crucified the Son of God? The plainest understanding could not but foresee, that those rulers would immediately employ their whole power against the authors of so heavy a crimination. And, accordingly, one of their body was soon afterward stoned, and another beheaded; while most of the rest, scattered abroad into strange cities, had to struggle against the Jewish anticipation of a temporal Messiah, which rendered the doctrine of *Christ crucified* an insurmountable *stumbling-block* to the greater part of their infatuated fellow-countrymen.*

NEITHER could they reasonably expect, that the Gentiles would readily renounce the Gods of their ancestors in favour of One, who had died the death of a slave; or exchange without reluctance the pompous ceremonies and gross sensualities of their religion for the simple worship of an invisible Deity, and a set of precepts professing to control not only the enormities of men's actions, but also the irregularities of their hearts—and all this, on the strength of arguments deduced from views of a future state of happiness or misery to be dispensed by their crucified Jesus, and on the affirmation of men unlettered and unknown! And if they failed in their undertaking, what could they expect, but to be persecuted by one class of those whom they addressed,

* 1 Cor. i. 23.

as blasphemers or rebels, and by another to be insulted as madmen or fools? That such indeed would be the case, they assure us, their Lord had often foretold them; and they, in their turn, warned their followers to be prepared for it. But those admonitions and convictions only rendered them more courageous *to resist, even unto blood.** Is it, then, in the slightest degree probable, that any persons of common sense would engage in an imposture, from which they could not on their own principles hope to derive any thing but infamy and ruin in this world, and damnation in the next?

4. UNDER the influence, however, of some unaccountable phrensy if they had ventured on the attempt, they must (humanly speaking) infallibly have perished in it; both from the nature of the grand fact which they asserted, and the methods which they adopted to gain it belief.

(1.) THE story of the Resurrection of a dead being, and of his subsequent ascent into heaven, would of course by it's strangeness generate a thousand objections; and some extraordinary proof would, therefore, be required to encounter them. How indeed, without some such proof, could such a story obtain credit? When, and where, could it first begin to be received? In the same, or in a succeeding age? At Jerusalem, where it was stated to have happened, or in Greece, or Italy, or Asia, or Africa? Change the time, and the scene, as you please: the difficulty remains. Suppose twelve men in London were now to affirm, that a person executed there six weeks, six months, or six years ago as a malefactor, was a prophet sent from God with supernatural powers, had been raised from the dead, conversed with them after his revival, and was subsequently taken up into heaven—would their united testimony cause them to be believed? Or, suppose them dispersed; and that while one or two told their story at Leicester, or Derby, or York, others carried it to Paris, Vienna, and Madrid. Could they hope for any thing better, than to be treated as idiots or lunatics? And, if they endeavoured to mend their scheme by stating that the transaction took place one or two hundred years before, without any historical proof whatever, would they not thereby rather increase than remove the difficulty? Particularly if, in consequence of such alleged facts, they called upon their hearers to renounce the religion of their forefathers, the indulgence of their dearest

* Heb. xii. 4.

passions, and the pursuit of their highest worldly interests; and even to hazard, in many instances, their liberties and their lives, on the prospect of an indefinite reward to be bestowed in a time and state, which no mortal eye had ever witnessed? If this is a case not now to be admitted as probable, why should it be admitted that it probably happened seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago?

(2.) But had it been the most plausible imposture that the wit of man could have devised, the methods adopted by its framers to procure it credit must alone have sufficed utterly to defeat their project. They asserted, not only that they had seen miracles wrought by Jesus of Nazareth, but also that they had themselves been endowed with miraculous gifts, which they undertook to display in works far transcending human power, bestowing (as they pretended) sight on the blind, soundness on the leper, activity on the lame, and occasionally even life on the dead: and *that* not in a corner, amidst a circle of dependents, or on a group of confederates; but often in the public streets, under the eye of enemies, and on the persons of strangers, in many cases well known to be beyond the reach of medical skill! Would impostors have dared to make such pretensions; or, daring to make them, would they not infallibly have been detected?

It may be said, that perhaps the Apostles did not undertake to do these things on the spot, but only asserted that 'they had done them elsewhere.' But would such an assertion have been believed? Who, especially that knew little of Peter, would have taken it upon his bare word, that he saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead at Bethany? And yet fewer would have credited his affirmation, that he had himself raised Dorcas at Joppa; unless he had actually wrought some equivalent miracle in their presence.

But to come still closer to the point—From the New Testament, which has above been proved to be genuine, it appears that the Apostles state themselves to have wrought miracles *in the sight* of those, to whom their speeches or writings were addressed; nay, to *have conferred upon some of them a similar power!* Could there be any room for delusion here? Upon this subject, Paul appeals even to the Corinthians and Galatians,* among whom were several persons disposed to seize every opportunity of subverting his influence: and could they have desired a better than was furnished by an appeal which, had not the fact referred to been true, must ut-

* 1 Cor. i. 5, 7, &c. &c.; Gal. iii. 2, 5.

terly have disgusted his most zealous friends? The same remark applies to his advices and reproofs relative to the use, and abuse, of their spiritual (or supernatural) gifts, about which, unless those gifts had really been bestowed, it would obviously have been absurd to write.

5. Yet they certainly gained extensive credit, and met with astonishing success. From the epistles contained in the New Testament we find that, at a very early period, there were Christian congregations in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Thessalonica, Philippi, Laodicea, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Crete, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and many other places: so immense was the number proselyted by the preaching of the Apostles! Perfectly satisfactory, therefore, must have been the evidence which they adduced; as the new converts cheerfully ventured their all, in both worlds, upon the strength of it.

It cannot be objected to them, that 'those converts were exclusively of the lower orders, whose understandings they had perplexed and misled by laboured arguments beyond their comprehension;' for several of them, we know (Sergius Paulus, Dionysius the Areopagite, the domestics of Cæsar's household, &c.) occupied superior stations in life; and we know, also, that the Apostles almost invariably appealed to simple facts—facts, which their hearers themselves had in some instances witnessed; and in others personally experienced.

6. These facts, therefore, must be admitted to be true; and the Gospel, of course, to be a Divine Revelation.

THE first teachers of Christianity assert, that Jesus was proved to be the Christ by Prophecies accomplished in him, and Miracles wrought by him and by others in his name.

(1.) In their disputes with the Jews, they frequently argued from the Prophecies of the Old Testament, many of which (they contended) were literally fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Fortunately these prophecies, which are still extant in their original language, have been constantly in the hands of a people implacably adverse to the Gospel. And in them we find, that God clearly announced his purpose of raising up for his people an illustrious Deliverer, who should come before the government ceased in the tribe of Judah, a little prior to the destruction of the second Temple, and about four hundred and ninety years after a command given to rebuild Jerusalem: that he should be the seed of Abraham, born of a virgin, of the house of David, in the town of Bethlehem;

but that, though he should exhibit a perfect pattern of universal holiness, and work many beneficial miracles, he should for want of external splendour be rejected, and at length put to death by the Jews. They farther add, that he should be raised from the dead before his body had seen corruption, and received into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, whence he should pour out his spirit upon his followers; in consequence of which, though the mass of the Jews should resist their progress to their own discomfiture, the Gentiles should be converted, and a kingdom established among them, to spread to the ends of the earth and continue to the remotest ages.

CAN we then wonder (with our knowledge of the verification of these prophecies) that those, who *sought the Scriptures daily, should receive the word with all readiness of mind?** Or can we suppose, that God would permit so great a variety of predictions, uttered by so many different persons and in so many different periods, to have their exact accomplishment in an impostor?

IN preaching to Heathens, who were less competent judges of the argument from Prophecy than the Jews, the Apostles insisted chiefly on the argument from Miracles. Of these, several were of such a nature, as to exclude all possibility of imposition or deceit. The Resurrection of Christ himself, in particular (as they well knew) was a fact, which once believed, left no doubt of the rest. And this, upon which they frequently lay the whole stress of their cause, they proved to be true by their own testimony miraculously confirmed. The inference is irresistible; since it is not to be imagined, that God would raise the dead body of a deceiver, who had solemnly appealed to such a resurrection as the grand proof of his mission, and expressly fixed the very day on which it should take place.

HERE we should close the subject, were we not able, in confirmation of what has been above advanced, to prove lastly,

7. That much has occurred, subsequently to the first propagation of the Gospel, to corroborate these evidences of it's truth.

I. For let us but consider, what God has been doing, during the last eighteen centuries, for it's establishment.

(1.) It's surprising diffusion in the world;

(2.) The miraculous powers bestowed not only upon

* Acts, xvii. 11.

the Apostles, but also upon succeeding teachers and converts;

(3.) The accomplishment of prophecies delivered in the New Testament; and, finally,

(4.) The preservation of the Jews, amidst all their persecutions, as a distinct people.

(1.) In addition to what has been previously inferred from the astonishing propagation of Christianity on it's first appearance (viz. that 'it could not be an imposture') it may be remarked as amazing, that even truth itself, under so many external disadvantages, should have had so illustrious a triumph.

PLINY, in the very next age to that of the Apostles, informs us that 'he found the heathen temples in Achaia almost deserted;'^{*} and Tertullian subsequently boasts, that 'if the Christians were to withdraw, whole cities and provinces would be dispeopled.'[†] Now had the Gospel, instead of opposing, been adapted to favour the vices, the errors, the interests, or the superstitions of mankind, we might more easily have accounted for this rapid prevalence: had it numbered philosophers and orators among it's missionaries, or princes and high-priests among it's patrons, eloquence might have charmed, or force compelled, multitudes into an ostensible acceptance of it's doctrines. But, without some such advantages, we can hardly conceive how any new religion should so suddenly gather strength, even in the darkest ages and the most barbarous countries. All these however, we know, were in array against it. And yet it triumphed over them all—triumphed, though published in an age the most enlightened, and countries the most refined; with the utmost plainness of language, and under the revolting prohibition of their favourite idol-worship.

(2.) With regard to the miraculous powers exercised by the successors of the Apostles, in confirmation of the Christian doctrines, it may suffice to appeal to the authorities of Tertullian[‡] and Minutius Felix.[§]

(3.) But we must not forget to record the accomplishment of the New Testament prophecies, particularly that delivered by Christ respecting the destruction of Jerusalem.|| Of this tragical event the circumstantial description furnished by the pen of Josephus (a Jewish priest, who had himself

^{*} Epist. x. 97.

[†] Apol. xxxvii.

[‡] Ib. xxii.

[§] Ib. xxvii.

|| Matt. xxiv.

been an eye-witness of it) so minutely corresponds with the prediction, that had we not known the contrary, we could hardly have helped concluding it had been written by a Christian in order to illustrate it. What our Lord, likewise, foretold relative to the long-continued desolation of the Jewish Temple, was supernaturally verified; for we are assured by a heathen historian, that 'when Julian the Apostate, in deliberate contempt of that prophecy, solemnly undertook to rebuild it, his impious project was miraculously frustrated again and again by globes of fire bursting out from the foundation.'* Similar observations might be made upon the predictions of St. Paul concerning the Man of Sin† and the Apostasy of the Latter Times,‡ and those of St. John delivered in the Apocalypse.

(4.) The continuance of the Jews too as a distinct people, notwithstanding all the persecutions which they have undergone, deserves our attentive regard. Scattered as they are, more especially throughout every part of Christendom, and exposed on account of their different faith not only to humiliation and contempt, but also in most places to civil incapacities and unchristian severities, they are still obstinately tenacious of their religion (particularly, of its ceremonial institutions) although their forefathers were so prone to apostatise from it.

THIS their providential dispersion and pertinacity, by exhibiting to us the accomplishment of many remarkable predictions,§ incontestibly establishes the truth of those ancient Hebrew records, on which much of the evidence of the Gospel depends—records so full to the purpose, that had the whole body of the Jewish nation been converted to Christianity, men would certainly have looked upon them (with the prophecies of the Sibyls) as made many years *after* the events, which they pretend to foretell.

II. LET us next inquire, what methods have been adopted by the enemies of the Gospel to destroy it.

THESE have generally been either persecution, or falsehood, or cavilling at some petty and obscure particulars in the revelation; without entering into the great argument

* Amm. Marcell. xxiii. † 2 Thess. iii. 3—12. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

§ See Jackson's 'Eternal Truth of the Scriptures,' &c.
I. i. § 3, 10—13.

on which it is built, and fairly debating what has been offered in its defence.

FROM the very outset, *bonds and imprisonment* awaited its preachers. This evinced a consciousness, on the part of the Jewish rulers, that they were unable to support their cause by the fair exertion of reason; as they would not, in that case, have had recourse to the interposition of brutal force. In subsequent periods, the cruelties inflicted by the heathen Emperors, especially during the Ten General Persecutions, were such as moved the pity even of the enemies of Christianity.*

Not contented however with personal inflictions, those enemies attempted to destroy the reputations of its adherents: charging them with human sacrifices, incest, idolatry, and all the crimes for which they themselves and their own imaginary Gods were indeed justly detestable; but from which the Christians amply vindicated themselves by many noble Apologies still extant, and incomparably the most valuable of any ancient uninspired writings.

To descend to later ages—The antagonists of the Gospel among ourselves have been told, again and again, that ‘we put the proof of it on plain fact.’

THEY cannot deny, that it prevailed in the world early and extensively. By some man, or body of men, it must have been introduced. Those, as they generally admit, were Christ and his Apostles. The latter, if their testimony was false, must have been enthusiasts, or impostors. Afraid of encountering the insuperable obstacles attached to either side of this alternative, our modern Deists decline both; and confine themselves to some miserable cavils, by which they affect to prove that to be in the highest degree improbable, if not impossible, which we have proved to be fact. One pronounces the light of nature to be a sufficient rule, and therefore sets aside all revelation as superfluous. Another disguises the miracles of Christ by misrepresentation, and then ridicules them as absurd. A third dabbles in pedantic conjectures upon the prophecies. But not one of them has undertaken to answer, directly, what has been advanced in demonstration of the grand fact; nay, they generally take no more notice of the positive evidence in its favour, than if they had never heard it proposed!

FROM a warfare so conducted, it was impossible that

* Tac. Ann. xv. 44.

Christianity should not be a great gainer. The Gospel has come like gold out of the furnace. Some late writers indeed, who have taken a prominent part in the wretched cause of infidelity, have been permitted (as it were, by a kind of judicial infatuation) to fall into such senseless inconsistencies, such mean buffoonery and scurrility, nay, such palpable falsehoods—in a word, into such a malignant *superfluity of naughtiness*—that to a wise and pious mind they must appear like those venomous creatures, who are said to carry in their bowels an antidote to their own poison.

THE Sum of what has been adduced is as follows:

THE Gospel is probable in theory: as, considering the nature of God and the circumstances of mankind, there was reason to hope that a Revelation might be given; and that, if given, it would most probably be accompanied by evidence internally such as that of the Gospel is, and externally such as it is said to be.

BUT Christianity is, also, true in fact. For it was early professed, as it was first introduced by Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and doctrines were recorded by his immediate attendants in books still extant in their original language, and faithfully translated into our own; so that they may be depended upon as assuredly written by the persons, whose names they bear. Hence the truth of the Gospel is easily deduced: for these authors, undoubtedly, knew the certainty of the facts which they related; and from their character and situation we can never believe, that they would have attempted to deceive the world, or if they had, that they would have succeeded. Yet they did succeed, in a most surprising manner. Their story, therefore, must have been true; and consequently the dispensation of the Cross, founded upon that story, divine. This conclusion is greatly strengthened by what has occurred, in various ways, subsequently to the first publication of it.

Let us, therefore, gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God in having favoured us with so excellent a Revelation, and confirmed it by such irresistible testimony; and pitying those who, with abundant opportunities of investigating that testimony, continue in their infidelity, let us remember how incumbent it is upon ourselves to adopt an opposite line of conduct. Let it be deeply impressed upon our minds, that this Gospel was not introduced with such awful sanctions, prophecies so solemn and miracles so magnificent, to be re-

jected and dishonoured at pleasure : but that as it shall determine, we shall all, from the greatest to the least of us, be happy or miserable for ever. And let it be our constant care, while we defend it with our tongues, to adorn it by our examples; *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation shining as lights in the world, and so holding forth the word of life,**

* Phil. ii. 15, 16.

AN
APOLOGY
FOR
THE BIBLE;
ABRIDGED FROM
BISHOP WATSON'S
ANSWER TO THE SECOND PART OF
PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

“Let all the nations be gathered together, and all the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth.”—*Isai. xliii. 9.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Among the individuals actively employed in stemming the tide of blasphemy and impiety, is one, who has spent a long life most successfully in similar labours. The subjoined statement is said, but I know not upon what authority, to be the production of her pen.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MR. THOMAS PAINE.

- ‘ The life of this unhappy man affords a striking example of the effect of such principles, as he professed, upon the moral conduct. He began his career in life with defrauding a public office in London, in which he had been employed, and from which he was consequently obliged to fly.*
- ‘ It is no less a fact, that his next employer was under the necessity of dismissing him from his house, for loose and immoral conduct with his wife. After his escape from France, he took up his residence in America, where he is thus described by Mrs. Dean, with whom he lodged :—“ He never failed to get drunk daily, and even in his sober moments constantly disturbed the peace, and destroyed the comfort of the family by his brutal violence and detestable filthiness.” On leaving her he engaged in a farm, hiring an old black woman to attend him, who lived with him only three weeks. Like her master, she was every day intoxicated ; and often would they lie prostrate on the same floor, swearing and threatening to fight, though incapable from extreme intoxication of approaching each other. His next servant, a poor old woman, was obliged to prosecute him for the amount of her wages.*
- ‘ During the whole of the week preceding his death, he never failed to get drunk twice a day. It appears likewise from a reproachful letter of a brother Jacobin and infidel, who had loaded him with favours which he repaid with the vilest ingratitude, and who had lent him money which he would never repay at all—that he had seduced a French woman from her husband, and afterward refused to discharge the debt contracted for her board and lodging, and exulted in having been the ruin of the man who vainly sued him for it. The letter subsequently describes the nauseous and disgusting situation from which it’s writer had relieved him, in doing which he witnessed scenes too detestable to be exposed to public view.*

‘ *How far Paine maintained his principles to the close of his days, and what effect they produced upon him at the near approach of death, we shall gather from the following account given by Dr. Manly, who attended him in his last illness:—*

“ During the latter part of his life, he would not allow his curtain to be closed at any time; and when it unavoidably happened, that he was left alone by day or by night, he would scream and halloo till some person came to him. There was something remarkable in his conduct about this period (which comprises the fortnight immediately before his death) when we reflect that Thomas Paine was author of several books denying our Lord Jesus Christ, and deriding every part of Revealed Religion. He would call out during his paroxysms of distress, without intermission, “ O Lord help me! God help me! Jesus Christ help me! &c.” repeating the same expressions without the least variation, and in a tone of voice that would alarm the house. Two or three days before his death, when he was constantly uttering the words above-mentioned, Dr. Manly said to him, “ What must we think of your present conduct! Why do you call upon Jesus Christ to help you? Do you believe that he can help you? Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ! Give me an answer, as from the lips of a dying man.” Paine made no reply: but to a lady, who constantly visited and relieved him on his death-bed, after asking her “ If she had read one of his works?” and being answered, that “ she thought it one of the most wicked books she had ever seen, and had therefore burnt it;” he replied, that “ he wished all who had read it had been equally wise”—adding, “ If ever the Devil had an agent upon earth, I AM THAT MAN!”

‘ *On June 8, 1809, at the age of seventy-two, died this miserable reprobate, who at the close of the eighteenth century endeavoured to persuade the common people of England, that all was wrong in that government and that religion, which had been transmitted to them by their forefathers. For the sake of England and humanity, it is to be wished that his impostures and his memory may rot together.’*

F. W.

March 30, 1820.

AN
APOLOGY
FOR
THE BIBLE,
&c.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I.

Books in support of religion are, in general, read with less eagerness, and remembered with greater difficulty, than those which favour infidelity: and the reason is obvious. Men readily believe what they wish; and the Christian religion being opposite to fraudulent dealings in our intercourse with others, to intemperance; the gratification of our own appetites, and to all the sins and vices which men are prone to, it cannot be a matter of surprise that many profligate and many thoughtless persons should listen with greediness to whatever frees them from its influence.

This principle will account for the fatal avidity, with which the sophistries of Paine, in his 'Age of Reason,' originally possessing little of novelty, have of late been revived and circulated in this country: sophistries, calculated to root out of the minds of the unhappy virtuous all their comfortable assurance of a future recompence; to annihilate, in the minds of the flagitious, all their fears of future punishment; and, by giving the reins to passion, to introduce all the public insecurity and the private misery necessarily connected with a state of corrupted mortals. What, indeed, has not society to dread from those, who may have deeply imbibed the wicked opinions of that and similar books?

Have their writers, it may be asked, calmly examined all the arguments, by which the truth of Revealed Religion has been, to the satisfaction of learned and impartial men, fully established? Thousands of such men—laymen too, of the most splendid talents (since priests, it seems, by the liberal apostles of the new Creed are deemed unworthy of attention) have embraced this religion as true. Could all these men be involved in the darkness of ignorance, or shackled by the chains of superstition?

Without any elaborate inquiry into the authenticity of the Scriptures, which has been so frequently and so ably handled as neither to want, nor perhaps even to admit, farther proof—it may safely be affirmed, in general terms, on the authority of all the ancient books in the world (sacred and profane, Christian, Jewish, and Pagan) that the Bible is the Word of God. This the Deist pronounces to be impossible, because among other things it is therein said, that ‘the Israelites destroyed the Canaanites by the divine command,’ and that would be repugnant to the moral justice of God; for ‘wherein (he asks) could crying or smiling infants offend?’ Now mark the inconsistency, with which he adduces this oft-refuted objection of former infidels. He admits the universe to be the work of God; and, of course, he must allow it to be in harmony with his moral justice to suffer ‘crying or smiling infants’ to be drowned by a flood, consumed by a fire, or starved by a famine. The Christian believes that the earth, at the express command of God, swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram *with their wives, and their sons, and their little children* *. This procedure the Deist deems so radically unjust, that he spurns as spurious the book, in which it is related. He reads in other records that Catania, Lima, and Lisbon were severally destroyed by earthquakes, and their inhabitants with *their wives, their sons, and their little children* swallowed up. Why does he not disbelieve these statements also? Or, believing them, why does he not spurn as spurious the book of Nature, in which

* Numb. xvi. 27.

they are written ; instead of inferring from the perusal of it, as he does infer, the moral justice of God ? Surely, it is most unfair to urge, as an argument against Revealed Religion, an apparent deviation from moral justice ; when an equally apparent deviation from it is not allowed to have any weight as an argument against Natural Religion.

The Canaanites had been devoted to destruction, as a wicked people, even in the time of Abraham ; but their iniquity was not, then, full. In the time of Moses, they were gross idolaters ; sacrificers of their own ‘ crying or smiling infants,’ devourers of human flesh, addicted in short to every species of the foulest profligacy. Was it contrary to the moral justice of God, to exterminate so wicked a people ? By his terrible vengeance, while the surrounding nations were struck with astonishment and terror, the Israelites (who were employed, as his agents, in the infliction of it) could not fail to receive a salutary impression of what they must expect, if they should be misled into the practice of similar abominations.

We cannot but feel that the shortness of our lives, the weakness of our faculties, and the inadequacy of our means of information conspire to make it impossible for us, worms of the earth and insects of an hour ! completely to understand any part of God’s great plan for the moral amelioration of mankind. To some indeed it may appear incredible, that the Almighty should have conversed with our first parents, and entered into covenants with the patriarchs ; that he should have suspended the laws of nature in Egypt ; and partially selecting a single nation as his favourites, should have condescended to draw up for their use a burthensome code of ordinances, ecclesiastical and civil, many of them apparently far below the dignity of a divine legislator. “ Nothing similar,” says the Deist, “ has happened in my time ; and therefore I do not believe that it ever really happened at any time.” As well might a man contend, that he never needed or experienced the care of a mother, the attention of a nurse or the discipline of a schoolmaster. God selected one

family from an idolatrous world ; reared it into a great people ; communicated to it a knowledge of his holiness, justice, mercy, wisdom, and power ; and disseminated it, at various times, throughout the earth, as *a leaven to leaven the whole lump*. Why should what was thus done to a single nation, for the general good, be done to all nations ? Why should the mode of instruction, adapted to the infancy of the world, be extended to it's manhood ? Why do we not rather, when we contemplate the dormant intellect of man in his savage state, and his miserable attainments (independently of divine instruction) as to the knowledge of God in a civilised state, admire the wisdom and goodness of that great Being in having thus let himself down, as it were, proportionately to our apprehensions ; and, after giving in the earliest ages extraordinary proofs of his existence and attributes, in having made the Jewish and Christian Dispensations mediums to convey to his rational creatures, throughout all ages, that knowledge of himself which he had communicated immediately to the first ? If it be alleged, that ' such an immediate manifestation of himself is strange,' it may be demanded in reply, " What is there, that is not strange ? " It is strange to each of us, that we are here ; that there is water, and earth, and air, and fire ; that there is a sun, and moon, and stars ; that there is generation, corruption, and reproduction. For none of these things can we ultimately account, without recurring to Him who made every thing. His works, as well as his word, are incomprehensible : but the former we cannot deny ; and the latter has assured us of all that we are concerned to know—that he hath prepared everlasting happiness for those, who love and obey him.

II.

As the Deist affects to establish a difference between the evidence necessary to prove the authenticity of the Bible and that of any other ancient work, it may be necessary to state distinctly the difference between the ' genuineness' and the ' authenticity' of a book. A

‘genuine’ book is one which was written by the person, whose name it bears as the author of it. An ‘authentic’ book is one, which relates matters of fact as they really happened. The books containing the novels of Richardson and Fielding are genuine, though the stories themselves are fables. Anson’s Voyage, on the other hand, may be deemed authentic, as probably containing a true narrative of events ; but it is not a genuine book, having been written, not by Walters to whom it is attributed, but by Robins.

The Deist’s argument, then, stands thus. ‘If it be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of their authority is gone at once!’ But this, if we concede the hypothesis for the sake of the argument, in fact only affects their genuineness. Their authenticity may remain. Though the names of the authors should be found to be different from what they are generally supposed to be, the transactions recorded in the books themselves may be strictly and universally true. Had the above writers, indeed, asserted that ‘they composed the books respectively ascribed to them,’ and this had turned out to be false, then the authority of the whole must have totally vanished ; as such a proof of their want of veracity in one point would have justly invalidated their testimony in every other. The same may be pronounced of works, whose authors are unknown. Anonymous testimony does not destroy the reality of the facts, which it affirms. Had Lord Clarendon published his History of the Rebellion without prefixing his name to it, the events recorded in it would have remained equally certain.

The Deist asserts, that ‘the miracles recorded in Tacitus, and in other profane historians, are quite as well authenticated as those of the Bible.’ To this assertion, utterly destitute as it is of proof, it may be replied that the evidence for the Bible-miracles is, both in kind and degree, so greatly superior to that for the heathen prodigies, as to have justified the most candid and enlightened of men in deeming the first the work of God, and in wholly disbelieving the latter. There is

one signal difference, however, between ancient and modern scepticism. The unbeliever of the third and fourth century allowed, that Jesus wrought miracles; but he contended, that his Apollonius, &c. wrought miracles also: whereas the later Deist denies the fact of Jesus having ever wrought miracles at all. Aware that if he admits the contrary, he must admit Christianity to be true, he has fabricated a sophistical axiom, that 'no human testimony can establish the credibility of a miracle:' and upon this, though it has been an hundred times refuted, he still pertinaciously insists, as if it could not be disproved!

Beginning with the first five books of the Bible—*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*, the Deist affects to show, that 'Moses was not the author of them, as they were not written till several hundred years after his time; being, in fact, no other than an attempted history of his life, and the times in which he is said to have lived (as well as of the times preceding) drawn up by some very ignorant and stupid pretender to authorship.' This difficulty, though no new discovery, was never heard of till the twelfth century; when Aben Ezra, a Jew of great erudition (with no purpose, however, of discrediting the work in general) noticed some passages, which he thought had been inserted in these books after the death of Moses. Hobbes, Spinoza, and Le Clerc believed that the books of Moses were so called, not from their having been written by him, but in consequence of their containing an account of his life. The latter however, who was an able theologian of the eighteenth century, upon attaining maturity was ashamed of what he had written in his younger years, and publicly retracted his error.

Neither is the Bible the only book, which has undergone the fate of being reprobated as spurious after having been received as genuine and authentic for many ages. It has been maintained, that the 'History of Herodotus was compiled in the time of Constantine; and that the classics, in general, are forgeries of the thirteenth or fourteenth century!'

As a preliminary objection, the Deist asserts, that

'there is no affirmative evidence that Moses was the author of the books in question.' No affirmative evidence! In the eleventh century, Maimonides drew up a confession of faith for the Jews, which is admitted by them all at this day. It consists of only thirteen articles, of which one affirms the authenticity, and the other the genuineness, of the books of Moses. This has been the faith of the Jews ever since the destruction of their city and Temple; it was their faith, when the authors of the New Testament wrote; it was their faith during their Captivity in Babylon; it was their faith in the time of their kings, and their judges; and no period can be shown, from the age of Moses down to the present hour, in which it was not their faith. Is this no affirmative evidence? Josephus affirms these books to have been written by Moses: Juvenal speaks of the volume, which Moses had written. But why enumerate the long list of profane authors, all bearing testimony to the fact of Moses being the leader and lawgiver of the Jewish nation? And if a giver, surely a writer, of their laws. The Scriptures teem with passages* to the same purport.

Even if it were admitted, that some learned Jew composed these books from public records many years after the death of Moses, it would not follow (as it has been already stated) that there is no truth in them. And it cannot be said, that the Jews had no public records; for the Bible itself furnishes abundance of proof to the contrary. But the arguments (so they are denominated) adduced to prove that these books were not, as to the main part of them, written by Moses, are both weak and trite.

The first is, that 'they are written in the third person;' "The Lord said unto Moses," or "Moses said unto the Lord," &c. This, the Deist asserts, is the stile used by historians in speaking of a person, whose life they are drawing up. True: and it is the stile also used by eminent men, such as Xenophon and Josephus, in speaking of themselves. If General Washington had written

* Exod. xxiv. 7. Deut. xxxi. 24, &c. &c.

the History of the American War, in which from his great modesty he might have spoken of himself in the third person, would it be reasonable that on this account, two or three thousand years hence, the truth of his narrative should be called in question? Cæsar writes of himself in the third person; "Cæsar made a speech," "Cæsar crossed the Rhine," &c. ; and yet every school-boy knows, that this is no argument against his being the author of his own Commentaries.

'But Moses,' it is alleged, 'could not be the author of the book of Numbers, because he there pronounces himself to have been *very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth* *'. Now admitting that this little verse was inserted by Samuel, or any of the other countrymen of Moses who knew his character and revered his memory, would it follow that therefore Moses did not write any part of the five books ascribed to his pen? And yet he might allowably have given this character of himself, upon the occasion by which it was extorted. Calumniated by his nearest relations, Aaron and Miriam, as guilty of pride and fond of power, he might justifiably affirm in his own vindication, that 'his temper was naturally mild and unassuming.'

Again, the Deist comments on what he invidiously calls 'the dramatic stile' of *Deuteronomy*. He might as reasonably ask, 'Where the author of Cæsar's Commentaries got the speeches of Cæsar,' as, 'Where the author of *Deuteronomy* got the speeches of Moses?' But his argument that 'Moses was not the author of this book, because the reason assigned in it for the observation of the Sabbath is different from that assigned in Exodus †,' merits a fuller reply.

The name '*Deuteronomy*' imports, in Greek, the 'repetition of a law.' And this repetition was a wise and benevolent proceeding in Moses; that those who were either not born, or were mere infants, when that Law was forty years before first delivered in Horeb, might have an opportunity of knowing it: especially, as their

* Numb. xii. 3.

† Compare Exod. xx. 11, with Deut. v. 15.

leader was soon to be taken from them, and they themselves were about to be settled in the midst of vicious and idolatrous nations. Where then is the wonder, that some variations should be introduced in a law republished many years after it's original promulgation.

Of the institution of the Sabbath the most probable account is, that the memory of the Creation was handed down from Adam to his posterity; and that the seventh day was, for a long time, held sacred by all nations in commemoration of that event; but that the peculiar rigidity of it's observance was enjoined by Moses to the Israelites alone. However this may be, the two reasons given for it's being kept holy—one, that on that day God rested from the work of creation; the other, that on that day He gave rest to the Israelites from the servitude of Egypt—involve no contradiction. If an author, writing the History of England, should inform his readers in one part of his work, that the parliament had ordered the fifth of November to be kept holy, because on that day God had delivered the nation from an intended massacre by gunpowder; and in another, because on that day he had delivered it, by the arrival of King William III., from the establishment of popery and arbitrary power—would any one thence rightly conclude, that he was not justified in both these modes of expression, or that he was not the author of them both?

The Deist farther pronounces brutal 'the law recorded in Deuteronomy*', which authorises parents, the father and the mother, to bring their own children to have them stoned to death for what it is pleased to term *stubbornness*.' Paternal authority, it should be remembered, among the Romans, Gauls, Persians, &c. extended to the taking away of a child's life. Such an extraordinary power Moses, by this law, hindered from being introduced or exercised among the Israelites: for by it the *father and the mother* must agree—in what? Not in stoning the child, but in *bringing him out unto the elders of the city*, to judge whether it was—not merely

* Deut. xxi, 18—20.

‘stubborn,’ but *stubborn and rebellious, a glutton and a drunkard*. So that it was a humane restriction of an unjustifiable power.

But ‘priests,’ the Deist sarcastically adds, ‘preach up Deuteronomy, because Deuteronomy preaches up tithes.’ Tithes are not preached up more in Deuteronomy than in Leviticus, in Numbers, in Nehemiah, and in Malachi; in the Law, the History, and the Prophets of the Jewish nation. The motive, which he invidiously alleges for noticing in the table of contents at the head of a chapter the prohibition of *muzzling the ox**, is as incorrect as it is illiberal. It is there noticed, because it was subsequently quoted by St. Paul, when he was proving to the Corinthians that *they, which preached the Gospel, should live of the Gospel*†. It was St. Paul, not the priests, who first applied this phrase to tithing; and, as he did not avail himself of the right for which he contended, he was not interested in what he said. The right itself he rests, not upon the authority of Moses or of Christ, but upon a reason founded in the nature of things, and illustrated by the practice of husbandmen, artists, soldiers, physicians, lawyers, &c. viz. that ‘the labourer is worthy of his hire.’ Tithes, indeed, were paid in the most ancient times even to kings. Four hundred years before the law of Moses was given, Abram‡ paid tithes to the king of Salem, who was priest also of the Most High God. But as this rests upon the authority of the Bible, to which the Deist excepts, another instance may be adduced on what he will, perhaps, deem the more satisfactory testimony of a profane author. Diogenes Laërtius, in his Life of Solon, cites a letter of Pisistratus, in which it is affirmed that ‘the people of Athens set apart a *tenth* of the fruits of their land to be expended in the public sacrifices for the general good.’

* Exod. xxv. 4.

† 1 Cor. ix. 14.

‡ Gen. xiv. 20, &c.

III.

Having done with what he calls the ‘grammatical’ evidence that Moses was not the author of the books attributed to him, the Deist now advances to his ‘historical and chronological’ evidence: and he begins with the single word ‘Dan,’ which he contends is incorrectly found in Genesis; as it appears from the book of Judges*, that the town of Laish did not receive that name till three hundred and thirty years after the death of Moses! This reasoning he illustrates in the following manner: “Havre-de-Grace was called Havre-Marat in 1793. Should then any dateless writing be found in time to come with the name ‘Havre-Marat,’ it would be certain evidence that such a writing must have been composed after the year 1793.” The conclusion is wrong. Supposing some hot republican should now publish a new edition of any old history of France, and instead of ‘Havre-de Grace’ should substitute ‘Havre-Marat;’ would any one, two or three thousand years hence, be justified in rejecting on that account the whole history as spurious—especially if he could be referred, for a proof of the genuineness of the book, to the testimony of the whole French nation? Besides, how is it proved, that the Dan mentioned in Genesis is the same as the town Dan mentioned in Judges? that it is indeed a town at all, and not a river? It is merely said, *Abram pursued them* (the enemies of Lot) *unto Dan*. A river was full as likely, as a town, to stop a pursuit: Lot, we know, was settled in the plain of Jordan; and Jordan, we know, was composed of the united streams of the Jor and the Dan.

The Deist next asserts, that the ‘passage in Genesis †,’ which speaks of *Kings reigning in Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, must have been written *after* the first King (i. e. Saul) began to reign over Israel, and consequently long after Moses!

* Compare Genesis xiv. 14. and Judges xviii. 29.

† Gen. xxxvi. 31—39.

And perhaps these nine verses may have been inserted in the book of Genesis, after the book of Chronicles (called in Greek by a name, *Paralipomena*, importing that it contained things 'omitted' in the preceding books) was written. Such interpolations have happened in other works, but have never been considered as invalidating the authority of those works.

The Deist then pronounces, that "Genesis, stripped of the belief that Moses was it's author, is nothing but an anonymous book of fables, absurdities, or lies!" Let him look into a book so common that almost every body has it, and so excellent that no body ought to be without it, 'Grotius on the Truth of the Christian Religion;' and he will there find, in references to the most ancient profane authors, abundant testimony to all the principal facts recorded in Genesis, the formation of the universe from a chaotic mass, the primeval innocence and subsequent fall of man, the longevity of mankind in the first ages, the depravity of the antediluvians, and the destruction of the world by the flood. The tenth chapter of Genesis, instead of telling us that one nation sprung from a cricket or a grasshopper, another from an oak, another from a mushroom, and another from a dragon's tooth, gives a rational account of the repopling of the earth, attested by every other book which contains any thing upon the subject.

The saving of the Midianitish maidens*, which is grossly imputed by the Deist to motives of lust, to a purer eye appears the result of sound policy mingled with mercy. The young men might have become avengers of their country; and the matrons would, perhaps, again have allured the Israelites to debauchery and idolatry: but the young women might without any such hazard be reserved, agreeably to the customs of those times, for slaves. And it may be asked 'Why, admitting the account of the expedition against Midian to be a true account, the Deist does not also admit the miraculous facts that, 'of the twelve thousand' Israelites engaged in it, *there lacked not one man*? That fact

* Numb. xxxi. 15.

was believed by the *captains of thousands and captains of hundreds*, at the time when it happened ; for they offered *an oblation to the Lord, an atonement for their souls**.

In calculating with affected mathematical precision the length and breadth of Og's *bedstead of iron*†, the Deist makes no allowance for the size of a royal bed; nor ever suspects, that the King of Basan might through vanity, like Alexander the Great, have intended by the size of his bed to convey to posterity an idea of his prodigious stature. Nor, indeed, is the problem yet solved—'To what height a human body, preserving it's similarity of figure, may be augmented before it will perish by it's own weight.' A person who had never been out of Shetland might, on proper testimony, have believed in the existence of the Lincolnshire Ox, or the largest drayhorse in London; though the oxen and horses in Shetland had not been bigger than mastiffs.

IV.

As to the 'anonymousness of the book of *Joshua*,' from which the Deist (with his usual mistake) infers it's total want of authority, it may be replied, that Doomsday Book also is anonymous; but our courts of law do not, therefore, hold it to be without authority. 'Yes,' he may allege; 'but Doomsday Book has been preserved with singular care among the records of the nation.' And who has told him, that the Jews had no records, or did not preserve them 'with singular care?' Josephus, the historian of the Jews, expressly affirms the contrary. If any one, having access to the Journals of the Houses of Lords and Commons, to the archives of the Treasury, War Office, and Privy Council, should at this day compile a History of the reigns of George I. and II., and publish it without his name; would any intelligent man, three or four thousand years hence, question the authority of that work, when he knew that the whole British nation had received it as authentic

* Numl. xxxi. 49, 50.

† Deut. iii. 2.

from the time of it's first publication down to the age in which he lived?

The Deist ridicules the story of 'an angel's descending to Joshua *;' though his errand was to assure that leader, that the same God who had appeared unto Moses, ordering him to *put off his shoes from off his feet because the place whereon he stood was holy ground* †, had now appeared to himself. Was this no encouragement to one, about to engage in war with many nations? Had it no tendency to confirm his faith, and to teach him to obey in all things the divine commands? And the shallow objector ought to have known, that *putting off the shoes* was an indication of reverence for the divine presence, and that the custom of entering the temples barefoot subsists in some countries even to this day.

The Deist next makes himself merry with what he calls the 'tale of the sun standing still upon Mount Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon ‡;' asserting, that 'this fable detects itself, because there is not a nation in the world that knows any thing about it!' And how can he expect there should, when there is not a nation in the world, whose authentic annals mount to this era by many hundred years? yet Herodotus says, the Egyptian priests informed him, that "the sun had four times deviated from his course, without producing any alteration in the climate of Egypt, the fruits of the land, or the phenomena of the Nile." This must therefore, apparently, refer to some *temporary* deviation, such as that produced by Joshua, and that in the time of Ahaz when *the shadow went back ten degrees* §. How this miracle was accomplished, it would be idle, if not impious, to attempt to explain: but one, who is not able to explain the mode of doing a thing, argues very ill if he thence infers that the thing was not done at all ||. We do not deny that the sun has been formed, or that the planets are retained in their orbits by the power of gravity, merely because we do not comprehend either the one or

* Josh. v. 13—15.

† Exod. iii. 5.

‡ Josh. x. 12, &c.

§ 2 Kings xx. 9.

|| But why may not the learned Bryant's translation of the passage be admitted, which appears to solve every difficulty? F. W.

the other. The reference to the book of Jasher *, if it does not to the Deist's conviction prove the fact, proves that the author of the book of Joshua believed the fact, and that the people of Israel admitted the authority of the work referred to. Otherwise, the insult to the reader's understanding would have been the same, as if Rapin had appealed to the Arabian Nights' Entertainments in proof of the Battle of Hastings.

As to the objection of the Deist founded upon Josh. viii. 28. *And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a heap for ever, even a desolation UNTO THIS DAY*; it seems to have little weight. Joshua lived twenty-four years after that event. And why might not any one, who had seen the heads of the Rebels in 1745, when they were first stuck upon poles at Temple-Bar, justly affirm twenty years afterward in speaking of the fact, as a proof of his veracity, "And they are there to this very day †."

After stating the terms of the solemn covenant made at Shechem between Joshua on the part of the Lord and all the tribes of Israel on their own part, it is added; *And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God ‡*. This proves, first, that a few years after the death of Moses there was such a book (undoubtedly the same, which Moses wrote and delivered unto the priests, the sons of Levi §) and, secondly, that Joshua wrote a part at least of his own transactions in that very book, as an addition to it. Surely, this renders it in the highest degree probable, that he recorded other material transactions; and that such as happened after his death have been inserted by subsequent writers, in order to render the history more complete.

The quotation of Joshua vi. 26. made in 1 Kings xvi. 34. proves, that the book of Joshua is older than the first book of Kings; and, if it does not actually prove, furnishes the strongest reason to infer, that Joshua wrote down the words which the Lord had spoken.

* Josh. x. 13.

† For similar modes of expression, used after the lapse of short intervals, see Deut. xi. 4. Matt. xxvii. 8. xxviii. 15.

‡ Josh. xxiv. 26.

§ Deut. xxxi. 9.

Without noticing the Deist's wretched comments on the book of *Judges*, it is necessary to animadvert upon his censure of the book of *Ruth*; as 'an idle bungling story foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl,' &c. &c. 'pretty stuff, indeed (he adds) to be called, the Word of God!' If he could bring himself to think with St. Austin, and many learned and good men since the time of St. Austin, that "those men, to whom the Holy Ghost revealed what ought to be received as authoritative in religion, might write some things as men with historical diligence, and other things as prophets by divine inspiration"—he would see cause, generally, to consider chronological, geographical, and genealogical errors (even when substantiated) with occasional repetitions, and slight historical contradictions, as absolutely undeserving of attention. He might not be allowed to aspire to the character of an orthodox believer, but he would not be an unbeliever, in the divine authority of the Bible, though he should admit human mistakes and human opinions to exist in some parts of it. This would be the first step toward the removal of the doubts of many sceptics: and when thus far advanced, the grace of God, assisting a teachable disposition and a pious intention, might carry them on to perfection.

With respect to Ruth in particular, she was not what the Deist represents her to be. The occasional difficulties of this country have driven many men with their families to America. If ten years hence a woman like Naomi, having lost her husband and her children, should return to England with an affectionate daughter-in-law, would any one be justified in calling that daughter-in-law a 'strolling country girl?' Would her history indeed, if she had been the unprincipled person thus described, have been recorded with implied commendation by any one professing to write a religious book? From that book we farther learn that, as a person imploring protection, she lay down at the foot of her aged kinsman's bed, to whom she was subsequently married, and that she was reputed by all her neighbours *vir-*

tuous*. Whoever reads the book of Ruth, bearing in mind the simplicity of ancient manners, will find it an interesting story of a poor young woman in a strange land following the advice, and attaching herself to the fortunes, of the mother of her deceased husband.

With regard to the two books of *Samuel*, it is generally admitted, though the Deist appears to be ignorant of this, that Samuel did not write any part of the second, and only a part of the first of them. I suppose (says the wise and good Dr. Hartley, who was a firm believer in Revealed Religion) that the Pentateuch consists of the writings of Moses put together by Samuel, with a very few additions: that the books of Joshua and Judges were in like manner collected, and the book of Ruth with the first part of the first book of Samuel written by him: that the latter part of that book, and the whole of the second, were written by the Prophets who succeeded him, suppose Nathan and Gad: that the books of Kings and Chronicles are extracts from the records of the subsequent Prophets concerning their own times, and from the public genealogical tables, made by Ezra: that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are collections of like records, some written by Ezra and Nehemiah, and some by their predecessors: that the book of Esther was written by some eminent Jew, in or near the times of the transactions there recorded, perhaps Mordecai; and the book of Job by a Jew, of an uncertain time; the Psalms by David, and other pious persons; the books of Proverbs and Canticles, by Solomon, &c. &c. †

‘The two books of *Kings*,’ the Deist asserts, ‘are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery, and wars.’ And, undoubtedly, many of the Kings of Israel and Judah were very wicked persons. But their wickedness did not spring out of their religion: nor were the Israelites chosen to be the people of God, because

* Ruth iii. 11.

† Observations on Man. Compare 1 Chron. xxix. 29. 2 Chron. ix. 29. xii. 15. xx. 34.; and say whether it be possible for writers to give a stronger evidence of their veracity, than by referring their readers to the books, from which they had extracted the materials of their history.

they were wicked; or wicked, because they were chosen. 'The Deist, however, deems the flattering appellation of 'God's chosen people' a lie, which 'the priests and leaders of the Jews invented to cover the baseness of their own characters, and which Christian priests (sometimes as corrupt, and often as cruel) have professed to believe!' Now the maker of a watch, or the builder of a ship, is not to be blamed, because a spectator cannot discover either the beauty or the use of disjointed parts. Exactly in the same manner may we reason concerning the acts of God's special providence. If we consider any one act, such as that of selecting the Jews, unconnected with every other act, it may excite doubts concerning his wisdom or his benignity. But if we connect the history of the Jews with that of other nations, from the most remote antiquity to the present time, we shall discover that they were selected for the general good of mankind; being *as a beacon upon the top of a mountain*, to warn them from idolatry, and light them to the sanctuary of the true God.

Because the drying up of Jeroboam's hand, the ascent of Elijah into heaven, the destruction of the children who mocked Elisha, and the revival of a dead man* (which are all recorded in the book of Kings) are not mentioned in the book of *Chronicles*, the Deist disbelieves them all. But surely it is a very erroneous mode of reasoning, from the silence of one author concerning a particular event to infer the want of veracity in another, by whom it is related; particularly in the present case, since the *Chronicles* (as was before observed) are only a supplement, or an abridgement, of preceding works. And what will the Deist say to the prophecy delivered at the very time of the drying up of Jeroboam's hand (975 years before Christ) about the overturning of his idolatrous altar, 1 Kings xiii. 2.; when upon consulting 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16. which refers to facts occurring 350 years after the delivery of that prophecy, he finds that it was fulfilled in all its parts?

As to his elaborate calculation of the date of the book

* 1 Kings xiii. 4. 2 Kings ii. 11. 24. xiii. 21.

of Genesis, founded upon the account of the Kings of Edom, inserted in Gen. xxxvi. 31—39\ (which has, indeed, already been answered) his argument, properly stated, stands thus:—‘ *A few verses* in the book of Genesis could not have been written by Moses; therefore, *no part* of that book could be written by him!’ A child would deny his ‘therefore.’ Again:—‘ *A few verses* in the book of Genesis could not have been written by Moses, because they speak of kings in Israel; therefore, they could not be written by Samuel, or Solomon, or any one who lived *after* there were kings in Israel, except by the author of the book of Chronicles!’ Lastly:—‘ *A few verses* in the book of Genesis are, word for word, the same with *a few verses* in the book of Chronicles; therefore, the author of the former must have taken them from the latter!’ And why not the author of the latter from the former, as he has also taken many other genealogies, supposing them to have been inserted by Samuel? Such are his “lame and impotent conclusions!”

V.

At length the Deist comes to two books, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, which he allows to be genuine, giving an account of the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity about 536 years before Christ: and yet these books, he asserts, are ‘nothing to us!’ The very first verse of *Ezra* says, *The prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled*. Is it ‘nothing to us’ to know, that Jeremiah was a person, to whom the Supreme Being had communicated a knowledge of future events? Is it ‘nothing to us’ to know, that upward of five hundred years before Christ the books of Chronicles, Kings, Judges, Joshua, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Leviticus, Exodus, and Genesis are all referred to by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* as containing authentic accounts of the Israelites from Abraham downward? Is it ‘nothing to us,’ in short, to know that we have a true history of that nation, *to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises;*

whose are the fathers, and of whom (as concerning the flesh) Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever?* Instead of deeming the Old Testament, with the Deist, a 'collection of lies and blasphemies,' it may on the other hand from it's internal evidence, as well as from the confirmation which is given to it by the most ancient profane historians and by the present circumstances of the world, be pronounced the oldest, the truest, the most comprehensive, and the most important of histories. It supplies more satisfactory proofs of the being and attributes of God, and of the origin and the end of human kind, than were ever attained by the deepest researches of the most enlightened philosophers.

That the author of the book of Ezra however, though admitted to be genuine, may not escape without a blow, the Deist by a petty parade of arithmetical skill affects to show, that the total amount of the Jews who returned from Babylon does not correspond with the particulars: as if Ezra, a man of eminent learning, could not have added together forty or fifty small numbers†! Is he ignorant, that the Hebrews denoted numbers by letters; and that, from the great similarity of several of the letters to each other, it was extremely easy for the transcriber of a manuscript to mistake a כ for a נ (2 for 20), a ג for a נ (3 for 50), a ד for a ר (4 for 200), &c.?

Upon the subject of an evil being, who under the name 'Satan,' the Deist falsely asserts, is 'only once mentioned in the Bible, and that in the book of *Job* ‡,' it may be remarked that the belief of such a being has prevailed universally. Hence the Egyptian Typho and Osiris, the Persian Arimanius and Oromasdes, the Celestial and Infernal Jove of the Greeks, &c. which apparently can only have arisen from a tradition of the fall of our first parents; disfigured, indeed, and obscured (as all traditions must be) by many fabulous additions.

* Rom. ix. 4, 5.

† Ezra ii. 3—64.

‡ Job. i. 6. But see 2 Sam. xix. 22. 1 Kings v. 4, where the word rendered 'adversary' is in the original, *Satan*. Indeed, it seems probable that this root was introduced into the Hebrew and other Eastern languages, to denote 'an adversary,' from it's having been the proper name of the great enemy of mankind.

‘The Jews,’ according to the Deist, ‘never prayed, but when they were in trouble!’ Like all other men, they probably prayed most fervently under such circumstances. And ‘they never prayed for any thing,’ he adds, ‘but for victory, vengeance, or riches.’ Let him read Solomon’s prayer * at the dedication of the Temple, and blush for his uncharitable assertion!

The Deist says, ‘It does not follow that the heathens worshipped the statues and images, which they set up.’ Not worshipped them! What does he think of Nebuchadnezzar’s Golden Image; of the Statue of the Mother of the Gods fetched by a decree of the Roman Senate from Pessinus, or of the *image (of the great goddess Diana) which fell down from Jupiter?* Not worshipped them! The worship was universal †.

‘It is an error,’ the Deist proceeds, ‘to call the *Psalms* the Psalms of David.’ This, as we have seen above (in the extract from Hartley) is no new discovery. It is admitted. If, however, he will have them to be ‘a collection from different song-writers,’ he must allow, from the spirit by which their writers were inspired, that in matter as well as manner they greatly excel every other collection. Let him compare it with the Odes of Horace or Anacreon, the Hymns of Callimachus, or the Choruses of the Greek Tragedies (no contemptible compositions, any of these); and he will quickly see how greatly in piety of sentiment, in sublimity of expression, in purity of morality, and in rational theology it surpasses them all.

In one who esteems the Psalms of David a ‘song-book,’ it is quite consistent to esteem the *Proverbs* of Solomon a ‘jest-book.’ What a pity that, instead of eight hundred of these jests, we had not the whole *three thousand*! Our mirth would, surely, be extreme. Let us take the very first of them, as a specimen of their jocoseness:—*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* Is there any jest in this? What Lord does Solomon mean? He means that Lord, who took the posterity of Abraham to be his peculiar people, redeemed them by a series of miracles from Egyptian bondage,

* 1 Kings viii. 23—53.

† 2 Kings xvii. 30, 31.

gave them the Law by the hands of Moses, and commanded them to exterminate the nations of Canaan; the Lord, whom the Deist rejects. The jest proceeds to say, that in so doing he *despises wisdom and instruction*. Again:—*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother*. He, whose heart has ever been touched by parental feelings, will see no jest in this. Once more:—*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not* *. These are the three first proverbs in Solomon's 'jest-book;' the perusal of which, if it does not make the reader merry, is singularly adapted to make him wise. As to Solomon's sins, we have nothing to do with them, but to avoid them; and to give full credit to his experience, when he preaches to us his admirable sermon on the vanity of every thing except piety and virtue.

Isaiah is abused by the Deist beyond any other book in the Old Testament, because his prophecies have received such a circumstantial completion, that unless he can persuade himself to consider them as 'one continued incoherent bombastical rant, without application and destitute of meaning,' he must necessarily allow their divine authority. He compares the *Burthen of Babylon*, the *Burthen of Moab*, &c. † denouncing vengeance against cities and kingdoms, to the story of the Burning Mountain, the story of Cinderilla, &c. The subjects of the latter, which amuse the child, vanish out of the mind of the man. But whoever carefully reads *Isaiah's Burthen of Babylon*, and accurately compares it with the subsequent state of that empire, must receive an impression never to be effaced from his memory. That Being alone, by whom things future are more distinctly known than past or present things are by man, could have dictated to the prophet the *Burthen of Babylon*.

The Deist next asserts, that 'the latter part of the forty-fourth chapter and the beginning of the forty-fifth are an imposition practised upon the world by the audacity of church and priestly ignorance; being a compliment to Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian Captivity at least a hun-

* Prov. i. 7, 8. 10.

† Isai. xiii. 1. xv. 1, &c.

dred and fifty years after the death of Isaiah.' Porphyry made a similar assertion respecting Daniel's prophecies, and Voltaire on the prediction of Jesus relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, because they saw no other means of evading the force of their evidence. But proof, proof is what we require, and not assertion, before we will give up our Bibles. Of this passage at least the 'application' is circumstantial, and the 'meaning' obvious; and in farther evidence of the absurdity of the Deist's hypothesis, let him be told that Cyrus, as a Persian, was most probably addicted to the Magian superstition of two independent Beings, one the author of light and all good, the other of darkness and all evil. Would a captive Jew, meaning to compliment the greatest sovereign in the world, be so stupid as to tell him, that his religion was a lie? *I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things* *.

But let him peruse the Burthen of Babylon. Was that, also, written after the event? Was Babylon then uninhabited? Was it then fit neither for the Arabian's tent, nor for the shepherd's fold †? Was it then *a possession for the bittern, and pools of water* ‡?

Above all, however, the Deist is to be blamed for attempting to lessen the authority of the Bible by ridicule, rather than by reason; for bringing forward every trite and petty objection, without any notice of the replies which they have repeatedly received, and urging them as if they were both new and unanswerable. An honest man, on the other hand, sincere in his endeavours to search out truth, would in reading the Bible—first, examine whether it ascribed to the Supreme Being any attributes repugnant to holiness, truth, goodness, or justice. Finding in it nothing of this kind, he would next consider that, being a very ancient book written by various authors at different and distant periods, it would probably contain some difficulties and apparent contradictions in it's historical parts. These he would endeavour to remove by the rules of such sound criticism, as

* Isai. xlv. 6, 7. † Isai. xliii. 20. ‡ Isai. xiv. 23.

he would employ upon any other book : and if he discovered that most of them were of a trifling nature, arising from short supplemental or explanatory insertions, or from the mistakes of transcribers, he would infer that the rest were presumptively of a similar description, though he might not perhaps be equally able to account for them all; especially, as he would remark throughout the whole book a degree of harmony and connexion utterly inconsistent with every idea of deceit. He would, thirdly, observe that it's miraculous and historical facts were so inseparably intermixed, that they must either both be true, or both false; and perceiving that the historical parts were better authenticated than any other history, he would also readily believe the miraculous parts. In order to confirm himself in this belief, he would advert to the prophecies; well knowing, that the prediction of things to come is as certain a proof of divine interposition as the performance of a miracle can be. And discovering that many prophecies had actually been fulfilled in all their minutest circumstances, and that some were apparently fulfilling at this very day, he would not suffer a few seeming or real difficulties to overbalance the weight of this accumulated testimony of the truth of the Bible. Such would be the natural conduct of a person solicitous to form an impartial judgment on the subject of Revealed Religion. But to return.

In answer to the Deist's poor remark, that Isaiah's stile is ' what is properly called prose run mad,' let him hear the learned Bishop Lowth, who says that " a poem translated literally from the Hebrew will still retain, even as far as relates to metre, much of it's native dignity and a faint appearance of versification."

His gross comment on the passage, *Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son* *, intended to prove that Isaiah was ' a lying prophet and an impostor,' proves the direct contrary. Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel, made war upon Ahaz, King of Judah, with the declared purpose of placing another family on his throne. The above sign was to assure Ahaz, that this purpose

* Isai. vii. 14.

should not come to pass. The Deist affirms, however, that it did come to pass; that Ahaz was ‘destroyed,’ and that ‘two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters, were carried into captivity.’ Both these assertions are falsehoods: Ahaz was *not* ‘destroyed;’ and the two hundred thousand persons, though made captives, were *not* ‘carried into captivity.’ For the chief men of Samaria *rose up, and took the captives, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren* *. The kings (as it had been predicted) failed in their attempt to destroy the House of David, and to make a revolution. They made no revolution: they did not destroy the House of David: for *Ahaz slept with his fathers, and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead* †.

VI.

The Deist now passes on to *Jeremiah*. His objection, that the book is in ‘the most confused and disordered condition,’ no more affects its genuineness or its authenticity, than the blunder of a bookbinder in misplacing the sheets of a volume would lessen its authority. Whether the prophecies were originally ill arranged by Baruch, or have been misplaced since by accident or the carelessness of transcribers, or whether they constitutionally differ from history in not being subject to an accurate observance of time and order, is a matter of little moment. But the charges of duplicity and false prediction are of greater importance.

And, first, as to the duplicity.

Jeremiah ‡, on account of his having boldly predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, had been thrust into a miry dungeon by the princes of Judah, who sought his life. The king however ordered him to be taken up out of it, sent for him to a private conference, in which he learned from him the purpose of God respecting Jerusalem; and directed him, if the princes should require him to disclose what had passed between them, to reply; “*I presented my supplication before the King, that he would not*

* 2 Chron. xxviii. 15. † Ibid. 27. ‡ Jer. xxxviii.

cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there." 'Thus,' the Deist asserts, 'this man of God (as he is called) could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate: for, certainly, he did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication; neither did he make it.' Now it is not said, that he told the princes 'he *went* to make his supplication,' but that he made it; and, as it is said in the preceding chapter that he did make it on a former occasion, is it improbable that in this conference he renewed it? At all events, Jeremiah did not violate any law of nature, or of civil society, in what he did. He told the truth only in part, to save his life; and he was under no obligation to his enemies to tell them the whole. The King of England cannot justly require a privy-counsellor to tell a lie for him: but he may justly require him not to divulge his councils to those, who have no right to know them.

Now for the false prediction.

In Jeremiah xxxiv. 2—5, it is prophesied; *Thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the King of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire: and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the King of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet thou shalt not die by the sword: but thou shalt die in peace, and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee."* Now, instead of all this, we are told (exclaims the Deist) that *the King of Babylon put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death**! What can he then pronounce, he adds, of 'these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?' It might be deemed extremely improbable that the same writer should, in the short course of a few pages, record what he wished to be deemed a prediction, and a fact absolutely falsifying that prediction. But setting aside this consideration, we find that the prophecy was actually fulfilled in all its parts. What then shall we pronounce of those, who call

* Jer. lii. 11.

Jeremiah an 'impostor and a liar?' Hear the history. *They burnt all the palaces of Jerusalem with fire* * : *and they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah* † : *and he gave judgement upon him* (or, more literally, 'spake judgement with him') *at Riblah, and put him in prison till the day of his death* ‡. There he died peaceably, *not by the sword* : and presumptively Daniel and the other Jews, who were men of great authority at the court of Babylon, would obtain permission to bury their deceased prince *with the burnings of his fathers* ; or the king of Babylon himself, revering royalty even in it's ruins, might order the Jews to inter and lament him after the manner of their country.

So much for the Deist's 'particularity in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah.' He particularises two or three passages, which have been proved to be not justly liable to his censure : and he omits every evidence of their probity and the intrepidity of their writers, and every instance of sublime composition and (what is of far more consequence) of prophetic veracity !

Proceeding to the rest of the prophets, whom he takes collectively, he in the very outset confounds prophets with poets and musicians ; and asserts, that 'the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies.'

That there were false prophets, witches, or fortune-tellers, &c. among the Jews, no person will attempt to deny. No nation has been without them. But when the Bible-prophets are represented as 'strollers spending their lives in casting nativities, predicting riches, conjuring for lost goods, &c. their office and character are wholly misrepresented. Their office was, to convey to the children of Israel the commands, the promises, and the threatenings of God : their character, that of men bravely sustaining the bitterest persecutions in the discharge of it. False prophets, indeed, are reprobated in many parts of Scripture §. But *what is the chaff to the wheat* ? what are the false prophets to the true ones ?

* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19.

† Jer. liii. 11.

‡ 2 Kings xxv. 5, 6.

§ See particularly, Jer. xxiii. 9—32.

Every thing good is liable to abuse. Who argues against a physician, because there are pretenders to physic? Was Isaiah 'a fortune-teller predicting riches,' when he said to king Hezekiah; "*Behold, the days come, that nothing shall be left to thee, and thy sons shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon * 2*" This prophecy was delivered in the year before Christ 713: and above a hundred years afterward it was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, and carried away the treasures of the king's house †; and when he commanded the master of his eunuchs, to bring certain of the king's seed, and nourish them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king ‡.

When Jehoram the idolatrous king of Israel, on the march with his allies and their armies, was distressed for want of water, and waited upon Elisha; he, with a courageous respect for the dignity of his character and the sacredness of his office (and not, as the Deist asserts, like 'a party-prophet, full of venom and vulgarity') said to Jehoram, "*Get thee to the prophets of thy father and to the prophets of thy mother §*." Regarding however the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, by whose advice he had been consulted, he ordered them to make the valley full of ditches: not for the common purpose of 'getting water, by digging for it;' but to hold the water when it should miraculously come without wind or ruin from another country, as it did come by the way of Edom.

As to Elisha's cursing the little children who had mocked him, and their consequent destruction—they had insulted him, probably, not as a man but as a prophet; and the Hebrew word translated 'child,' it should be remembered, is applied to grown-up youths. Be this as it may, had the cursing been a sin, it would not have been followed by the miraculous death of the persons cursed: for God best knows, who deserve punishment; and such a judgement, it may be concluded, would not be inflicted without a salutary effect on the idolatrous witnesses of it.

By admitting the genuineness of the books of *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, who lived during the Babylonian Captivity,

* Isai. xxxix. 6, 7.

† Dan. i. 3.

‡ 2 Kings xxiv. 13.

§ 2 Kings iii.

the Deist appears to cut up the very root of his whole performance. For how can any intelligent man, after such a concession, if he reads the book of Daniel in particular with impartiality, refuse his assent to the truth of Christianity? In vain he may assert, that the interpretations and applications, which commentators and priests have made of these books, only show the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go! The scientific Ferguson, who was neither a commentator nor a priest, in his Tract upon the 'Year of our Saviour's Crucifixion,' concludes his dissertation on the ninth chapter of Daniel by saying; "Thus we have *an astronomical demonstration* of the truth of this ancient prophecy." Dispassionately studied, indeed, it is adapted to make every body become Christians.

The Deist's strange hypothesis—that Ezekiel and Daniel only 'pretended to have dreamed dreams and to have seen visions, by way of carrying on a disguised correspondence' relative to the rescuing of their country from the Babylonian yoke!—is wild and extravagant almost beyond belief; as is likewise his subsequent conjecture, that *Jonah* was 'a fable written by some Gentile to expose the nonsense, and satirise the vicious and malignant character, of a Bible-prophet or a predicting priest.'

He next quotes from Ezekiel * a passage respecting Egypt, in which it is said, *No foot of man or of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years;* and broadly, and briefly, asserts it to be 'false.' Now we know too little of the history of Egypt, at that remote period, to be able to prove that it was not false. Perhaps only a part of Egypt is here spoken of: and, if not, a literal accomplishment of hyperbolical expressions denoting great desolation is hardly to be expected. But we are told by Megasthenes and Berosus, two heathen historians who lived about three hundred years before Christ, that 'Nebuchadnezzar conquered the greater part of Africa' and 'took captives in Egypt,' which appears to imply the fulfilment of the prediction. At any rate, had the Deist looked four verses onward, he would have there found a prophecy (relative to the same

* Ezek. xxix. 11.

country) delivered above two thousand years ago, which has been receiving it's completion from that time to this: *Egypt shall be the basest of the kingdoms, &c* *. This the Deist may, if he pleases, call 'a dream, a vision, or a lie:' but, surely, it is a wonderful prophecy; for Egypt has been successively the prey of the Babylonians, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Saracens, the Mamelucs, and the Turks. Another prediction also, concerning king Zedekiah, may here be adduced:—*I will bring him to Babylon; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there* †. What! *not see Babylon, though he should die there!* How, again, is this consistent with what Jeremiah had foretold, that *he should see the eyes of the king of Babylon* ‡? This apparent contradiction induced Zedekiah, as Josephus informs us, to give no credit to either of the prophets: and yet he, unhappily, experienced the truth of both. He saw the eyes of the king of Babylon, not at Babylon, but at Riblah: his eyes were there put out; and he was carried to Babylon, yet he saw it not.

And thus the Deist imagines, that he has demolished, and for ever, the authority of the Old Testament: a book, which Sir Isaac Newton esteemed the most authentic of all histories; which, by it's celestial light, illumines the darkest ages of antiquity; which is the touchstone enabling us to distinguish between the God of Israel, holy and just and good, and the impure rabble of heathen deities; which has been thought, by competent judges, to have afforded matter for the laws of Solon, and a foundation for the philosophy of Plato; which has been illustrated by the labour of learning, in all ages and countries; and admired and venerated for it's sublimity, it's piety, and it's veracity by all who were able to read and to understand it §. He has 'gone indeed through the wood,' as he says, and with the fullest intention to cut it down: but he has only pointed out a

* Ezek. xxix. 15.

† Ibid. xii. 13.

‡ Jer. xxxiv. 3.

§ I cannot forbear adding, in a note, the deliberate judgement of the late Sir William Jones, one of the profoundest of Eastern scholars as well as one of the most excellent of men, who was as incapable of

few unsightly shrubs, he has entangled himself in thickets of thorns and briers, and has lost his way on the mountains of Lebanon; the goodly cedar-trees whereof scorn the blunt edge and the base temper of his axe, and laugh unhurt at the feebleness of his stroke. Ridiculing things held most sacred, and calumniating characters esteemed most venerable, in order to excite the scoffs of the profane, increase the scepticism of the doubtful, shake the faith of the unlearned, suggest cavils to *the disputers of this world*, and perplex the minds of honest men seeking to worship the God of their fathers in sincerity and truth; he has not so much as glanced at the great design of the whole volume, or the harmony and mutual dependence of it's several parts. He does not perceive, that but for the selected people of God, and the truths delivered in their Scriptures, he and the whole world would have been at this day worshippers of idols. He has passed by all the prophecies respecting the Messiah—though they absolutely fixed the time both of his coming, and of his being cut off; and described his office, character, condition, sufferings, and death in the most circumstantial manner, several hundred years before the events themselves actually took place in the person of Jesus of Nazareth: and he has totally neglected noticing the testimony of the whole Jewish nation to the truth both of the natural and the miraculous facts recorded in the Old Testament!

affirming what he did not fully believe, as of suppressing what he did:—"I, who cannot help believing the divinity of the Messiah, from the undisputed antiquity and manifest completion of many prophecies (especially, of those of Isaiah) in the only person recorded by history to whom they are applicable, am obliged of course to believe the sanctity of the venerable books, to which that sacred person refers as genuine. But it is not the truth of our national religion, as such, that I have at heart: it is truth itself." And again:—"I have carefully and regularly perused these Holy Scriptures (N. B. This was written in his own copy of the Bible); and am of opinion that the volume, independently of it's divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written." (Life by Lord Teignmouth, II. 236, 245. 8vo. edit.) In a Discourse likewise, addressed to the Asiatic Society in 1791, he declares his firm belief, that "the prophecies were genuine compositions, and having been fulfilled, were consequently inspired." F. W.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

VI.

‘The NEW TESTAMENT, they tell us (asserts the Deist) is founded upon the prophecies of the Old: and if so, it must follow the fate of it’s foundation!’ Undoubtedly, the fate of the two is inseparably linked together; though the New is not founded solely on the prophecies of the Old. Our Saviour, indeed, refers the Jews to Moses *who wrote*, and the Scriptures *which testified of him*; but he also adds, *Though ye believe not me, believe the works* *. Hence it appears, that the verification of his mission, even to the Jews, did not rest exclusively on the truth of the prophecies of the Old Testament: so that, if some of those prophecies could even be proved to have been misapplied by commentators, Christianity would not thereby be overturned.

‘The mere existence of such a woman as Mary, and such men as Joseph and Jesus,’ the Deist says, ‘is a matter of indifference.’ He condescends, however, to think it probable that ‘there were such persons;’ and only ‘contends against the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon.’ He does not then repute it ‘a fable,’ that Jesus Christ lived upwards of 1800 years ago in Judæa, where he went about doing good, constantly attended by several disciples; who, a few years after he had been put to death by Pontius Pilate, became numerous not only in that country, but throughout the whole Roman empire: that a particular day has been observed by them ever since in a religious manner, in commemoration of his real or supposed resurrection; and that the constant celebration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper may from the present time be traced back to him, as the author of both these institutions. Now, if these things be admitted to be fact, they involve so many other parts

* John v. 46. 39. x. 38.

of the New Testament, that but scanty materials are left for the Deist's 'fable.'

The miraculous conception, however, he pronounces a fable 'blasphemously obscene.' Impure must that imagination be, which can discover any obscenity in the Angel's declaration to Mary; *the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee* *. As well might he find it in Genesis, where it is said, *The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters* †.

And now he comes to 'a position, which (he says) cannot be controverted: namely, first, that the agreement of all the parts of a story does not prove that story to be true, because the parts may agree and the whole may be false; and, secondly, the disagreement of the parts of a story proves that the whole—i. e. of course, the pith and marrow of the story—cannot be true.' Yet, surely, it is scarcely possible for even two persons (for instance, Sir John Hawkins and Mr. Boswell, in their *Lives of Dr. Johnson*) and the difficulty is increased, if there are more than two—to draw up the biography of any one of their acquaintance without considerable differences as to the existence and succession of its several incidents. But these differences, in minute circumstances, will not invalidate their testimony as to all material transactions; much less will they render the whole of their narratives 'a fable.' If several independent witnesses of fair character should agree in testifying, that a murder or a robbery was committed at a precise time, in a particular place, and by a certain individual; every court of justice in the world would admit the fact, notwithstanding the abstract possibility of the whole being false. And again:—If several such witnesses should agree in affirming, that they saw the King of France beheaded, though they might disagree as to the figure of the guillotine, or the size of the executioner, &c. every court of justice in the world would think, that such minute differences did not overturn the evidence respecting the fact itself.

This 'incontrovertible' position then, as he terms it, the Deist applies to the genealogies of Christ given by

* Luke i. 35.

† Gen. i. 2.

Matthew and Luke. There is a disagreement between them, he says: and ‘ if Matthew speaks truth, Luke speaks falsehood; if Luke speak truth, Matthew speaks falsehood;’ and therefore, it seems, neither of them is ‘ entitled to be believed in any thing he says afterward!’ Here both the premises, and the conclusion, are inadmissible: the conclusion—because two authors, who happen to differ in tracing back the pedigree of an individual for above a thousand years, cannot therefore be justly deemed incompetent to bear testimony to the transactions of his life, unless an intention to falsify can be proved against them: the premises—because Matthew speaks truth, and Luke speaks truth, though they do not speak the same truth; Matthew giving the genealogy of Joseph the reputed father of Jesus, and Luke that of Mary his real mother. If, indeed, either of them had fabricated the genealogy in question, he must have been conscious, from knowing the care with which the public registers were preserved among the Jews, that he would necessarily have been exposed to immediate detection.

In what the Deist says about ‘ forty years being assigned by Matthew, contrary to all experience, to each of twenty-seven successive generations;’ about ‘ each being an old bachelor before he married,’ &c. which he with his usual grossness pronounces ‘ not even a reasonable lie,’ he is totally wrong. By inserting from 1 Chron. iii. 11, 12. three generations, through whatever mistake omitted in the Evangelist, the average age of the fathers at the birth of the sons recorded is reduced to thirty-six: and the marriage might have preceded the birth of that son by many years; especially, as it is not always the first-born son who succeeds his father in the list. David had at least six sons grown to manhood, before Solomon was born, and Rehoboam at least three elder than Abia, or Abijah.

From the mention of some things in one Evangelist, which are not mentioned by all or by any of the others, the Deist represents the Gospels ‘ not as written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but by some unconnected individuals, each making his own legend.’ Even if we admit this a single moment for the sake of the inference, would it not, by removing every possible sus-

picion of fraud and imposture, very strongly confirm the gospel-history? Had they agreed in nothing, their testimony ought to have been rejected as a legendary tale: had they agreed in every thing, it might have been surmised that, instead of being unconnected individuals, they were a set of associated impostors.

As an instance of contradiction between the Evangelists, the Deist asserts that 'Matthew says the Angel announced the immaculate conception to Joseph; whereas Luke says, he appeared unto Mary.' The truth is (and it is so obvious, that only the blind could have missed it) he appeared unto both: to Mary, when he informed her, that she should by the power of God conceive a son; and to Joseph some months afterward, when Mary had returned from her long visit to her cousin Elizabeth. What follows is too abominably indecent, too blasphemously profane, for any modest ear.

The story of the destruction of the young children by the order of Herod, being mentioned only by Matthew, is therefore pronounced by the Deist 'a lie.' Are we, then, to reject all facts recorded by only one historian? Matthew was writing his gospel for the use of the Jews, who must have had a melancholy remembrance of the massacre referred to. The Gentiles were less interested in it; though there is reason to believe, from a passage in Macrobius *, that it was known at Rome. As to what the Deist says of John, that 'he was under two years of age, and stayed behind,' and yet escaped; it cannot be proved that John was at that time in the district to which the edict of Herod was confined, or that he had not exceeded the stated limit, which probably included only such as had just completed their first year. John was, certainly, six months older than Jesus.

'Not any two of the Evangelists,' the Deist observes, 'agree in reciting (in exactly the same words) the inscription which, they tell us, was put over Christ when he was crucified.' But might not the unessential verbal difference have arisen from that inscription being written in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; which

* Saturn. II. 4.

(though all of the same meaning) would probably, when the Hebrew and the Latin were translated into Greek, involve a verbal difference in the translations ?

‘ The only one (he adds) of the men called Apostles, who appears to have been near the place of Crucifixion, was Peter.’ This is not true. We do not know, that Peter was present at all at the crucifixion : but we do know that John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was ; for Jesus spoke to him from the cross. ‘ And why,’ he asks, ‘ should we believe Peter, when he was convicted, by their own account, of perjury in swearing that “ he knew not Jesus ? ” ’ Why ? Because he sincerely repented of his wickedness, and suffered martyrdom in attestation of the truth of the Christian Religion.

But the Evangelists disagree also, he asserts, as to the time of the crucifixion ; Mark saying it was at the third hour (nine in the morning), and John at the sixth, i. e. according to the Deist’s hypothesis, at twelve at noon. Let us only admit however that John, writing his gospel in a Roman province of Asia, might have used the Roman method of computing time, which resembled our own, and the alleged contradiction vanishes : as in that case the sixth hour, when Jesus (according to that writer) was *condemned*, would be six in the morning ; and the intermediate three hours from six to nine, when he was *crucified*, might be employed in making preparations.

And here we may notice some very natural incidents attending that event, particularly as to those who stood by Jesus in his last trying hour ; John the friend of his heart, his tender mother whom he consigned to John’s protection, and those who had gratefully followed him through life. Such a conformity of circumstances to our probable expectation supplies an argument in favour of the truth of the Gospels far outweighing a parcel of paltry objections, which arise perhaps solely out of our ignorance of the customs and manners of that remote age.

‘ The dashing writer of the book of Matthew,’ the Deist next asserts, is ‘ not supported by the writers of the other books in his account of the miracles which attended the crucifixion—the preternatural darkness,

the rending of the veil of the Temple, the earthquake which rent the rocks, and the resurrection of the bodies of many saints that slept.' This is not true. Matthew is supported both by Mark and Luke, with respect to the first two; and those two they probably thought abundantly sufficient to convince any person, as they convinced the Centurion, that Jesus *was the Son of God*. These two, indeed, were better calculated to produce conviction among the persons, for whose information Mark and Luke wrote, than the two latter: as the earthquake, even if not local, might have been pronounced by an objector a natural phenomenon; and those, to whom the revived saints appeared, might be dead or scattered abroad. But the darkness must have been generally known and remembered, and the veil of the temple could easily be preserved. John's silence is accounted for by the circumstance of his gospel being intended as a kind of supplement to the three others. One occurrence, however, of great importance he has stated with peculiar distinctness, relative to *the blood and water* which flowed through the wound made by the soldier's spear. The blood is easily accounted for: but whence came the water? The anatomist tells us, 'from the pericardium.' So consistent is evangelical testimony with the most curious researches of natural science.

Without entering into the Deist's jocose speculation upon what Matthew *might have* told us respecting this 'army of saints,' as he calls them, suffice it for us to believe that all *that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth*. If none of these miracles had been true, or rather if any of them had been false, what motive could Matthew, writing to the Jews, have had for trumping up such wonderful stories? Every reader, whom he met, would have told him that he was 'a liar and an impostor.' Would any writer, who should now address to the French nation a History of Louis XVI., venture to affirm that, when he was beheaded, there was darkness for three hours over all France; that there was an earthquake; that rocks were split, and graves opened, and dead men brought to life, who actually appeared to many persons in Paris?

VIII.

‘The tale of the Resurrection,’ the Deist says, ‘follows that of the Crucifixion. If these writers had given their evidence, with respect to the *alibi* of the dead body, in a court of justice in the same contradictory manner, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropped for perjury, and would have justly deserved it.’ On the contrary, the seeming confusion is occasioned by the brevity of the accounts, and would have been cleared up at once, if the witnesses of the resurrection had been examined before any judicature whatever. As we cannot have this *vis à voce* examination of them all, let us question the Evangelists.

Q. Did you find the sepulchre of Jesus empty?

A. One of us actually saw it empty, and the rest heard it was so from eye-witnesses.

Q. Did you, or any of the followers of Jesus, take away the dead body from the sepulchre?

All. No.

Q. Did the soldiers, or the Jews, take it away?

All. No.

Q. How are you certain of that?

A. Because we saw the body when it was dead, and we saw it afterward when it was alive.

Q. How are you certain, that what you saw was the body of Jesus?

A. We had been long and intimately acquainted with him, and knew his person perfectly.

Q. Did you not, through terror, mistake a spirit for a body?

A. No: the body had flesh and bones: and we are sure that it was the very body, which hung upon the cross; for we saw the wound in the side, and the print of the nails in the hands and feet.

Q. And all this you are ready to swear?

A. We are: and we are ready to die also, sooner than deny any part of it.

Surely, this would satisfactorily establish the fact of the dead body’s being removed from the sepulchre by supernatural means.

‘The Jews,’ the Deist says, ‘applied to Pilate for a watch to be set over the sepulchre; but he omits the reason alleged for the request, viz. *because that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, “After three days I will rise again *.”* Yet it is highly material: for at the very time that Jesus predicted his resurrection, he predicted also his Crucifixion †; and this part of the prophecy they knew had, through their own malignity, been accurately fulfilled: yet were they so infatuated as to suppose, that by a guard of soldiers they could prevent the completion of the other. That the rest say nothing about this application, &c. proves nothing against it. Omissions are not contradictions.

The Deist proceeds to comment on what he deems the variations of the Evangelists, with respect to the hour at which the women came to the sepulchre. But they agree as to the day; and, as to the time of day, it was early in the morning. The degree of twilight, which lighted them on their way, is of little consequence. And John, who states that Mary Magdalene went to the sepulchre, does not say (as the Deist makes him say) that she went alone: she might, for aught that appears, have been accompanied by all the women mentioned in Luke. Lastly, on the subject of his insinuation that she was a woman of bad character, it deserves to be considered whether there is any scriptural authority for the imputation; and, at all events, whether a reformed woman of that description ought to be esteemed an incompetent witness of a fact.

The stone had obviously been rolled away, by the statement of all the Evangelists before the women came to the sepulchre. Such of them as do not mention that this was done by an angel, who subsequently sat upon it, merely omit giving an account of a transaction which took place previously to the women’s arrival. In the interval, the angel might have entered the sepulchre; and from the first there might have been another within. Luke, says the Deist, affirms ‘there were two, both standing up: and John affirms, they were both sit-

* Matt. xxvii. 63, 64.

† Matt. xvi. 21.

ting down *.' He chooses to forget, that they do not both speak of the same instant. Luke speaks of the appearance to the women, and John of the appearance to Mary Magdalene alone, who remained weeping at the sepulchre after Peter and John had left it. All his objections, in fact, are grounded upon the mistake of supposing, that the angels were seen at one precise moment, in one particular place, and by the same individuals.

His inference from Matthew's using the expression *until this day* †, viz. that 'the book must have been manufactured after a lapse of some generations at least,' is inadmissible against the positive testimony of all antiquity. And for the bungling story about *stealing away the body* ‡, the chief priests are answerable, not the Evangelists.

The Deist now comes to 'that part of the evidence in those books, that respects the pretended appearance of Christ after his pretended resurrection.' And his first blunder is misquoting Matthew xxviii. 7. for the purpose of *creating* a contradiction, and then condemning it. The passage is, "*Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee;*" which might properly be translated, 'He will go,' and literally means, 'He is going.' This the Deist quotes, '*Behold, he is gone!*' Of such a blunder even his dashing Matthew could not have been guilty; since he adds immediately afterward, that Jesus met the women *as they departed quickly from the sepulchre* §. If the passage in Matthew, *THEN the eleven, &c.* || had been translated (as it might better have been) *AND the eleven*, all the difficulties about the anachronism of these disciples 'marching to Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment at the very time when, according to John, they were *assembled in another place for fear of the Jews* ¶, totally vanish. Matthew, intent upon the purposed meeting in Galilee, omits the mention of many appearances recorded in John, and thus

* Luke xxiv. 4. John xx. 12, 13.

† Matt. xxviii. 13.

|| Matt. xxviii. 16.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 15.

§ Matt. xxviii. 8.

¶ John xx. 19.

seems to connect the day of the resurrection of Jesus with that of the departure of the disciples. It should be also farther recollected, that the feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately followed the eating of the passover, lasted seven days; and that strict observers of the law did not think themselves at liberty to leave Jerusalem, till that feast was ended: which is a collateral proof, that the disciples did not set off for Galilee on the day of the resurrection*.

The Deist asks, Why Jesus did not show himself to all the people after his resurrection? So asked Spinoza. But God had given the Jews many opportunities of seeing the miracles of Jesus, though he did not oblige them to believe what they saw. The Chief Priests and the Pharisees, we know, admitting the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus†, persevered in their incredulity; and so probably would the other Jews have persevered also after the resurrection of Jesus. Lazarus had been buried four days, Jesus only three: the body of Lazarus had begun to undergo corruption, the body of Jesus *saw no corruption*. If Jesus then had shown himself generally after his resurrection, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees would probably have gathered another council, and have said a second time, “*What do we?*” With respect to ourselves, the evidence of this great event is far more convincing as it now stands, than if it had been said that Jesus showed himself to every man in Jerusalem: for then it would have had no sifting, and it might have been suspected that the whole story had been fabricated by the Jews.

The Deist thinks Paul an improper witness of the resurrection: whereas surely he was, on the other hand, one of the fittest that could have been chosen; because his testimony is that of a former enemy. Paul had, in his own miraculous conversion, sufficient ground for believing that to have been a fact, which he had for-

* It might be added, that the Arch-deist, Paine, reckons Luke as one of the Eleven! and speaks of him as an eye-witness of what he relates. Though a person, who affects to write comments on the Bible, ought to have known that he was not an Apostle; and we learn from himself, that he wrote from the testimony of others. Chap. i. 2.

† John xi. 47.

merly through extreme prejudice considered as a 'fable.' For the truth of the resurrection, he appeals to above two hundred and fifty living witnesses*; and that in the face of those, who would not have failed to blast his character, if he had advanced an untruth. For Corinth was full of Jews, and contained many Christians following teachers, who were arrayed in opposition to Paul. He must have been an idiot—which no one can believe him to have been—if he had put it in the power of any of these to prove, from his own letter, that he was a 'liar and an impostor.'

And now the Deist proceeds to the Ascension, about which he says 'neither the writer of the book of Matthew nor the writer of the book of John, has said a syllable!' John has not, indeed, given an express narrative of it; but he has certainly said something about it: *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, "I ascend unto my father and your father, and to my God and your God."* If the fact itself be not detailed by either of them, it may reasonably be supposed that it was on account of its notoriety. That it was notorious, is justly to be collected from the reference made to it by Peter in the hearing of all the Jews, a very few days after it had happened: *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, &c.* †. As to the difference of the statements of Mark and Luke, Mark only omits the particulars of Jesus going with his Apostles to Bethany and blessing them there, which are mentioned by Luke: and silence concerning a fact, the Deist must again be reminded, is not a denial of it ‡.

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

† Acts ii. 32, 33.

‡ Paine likewise asserts, that 'the whole space of time from the Crucifixion to what is called the Ascension, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four! and that all the circumstances are reported to have happened near the same spot, Jerusalem.' Yet from John we learn, that Jesus appeared to his disciples on the day of his resurrection, when Thomas was not with them; and *after eight days*, he appeared to them again, when Thomas was with them (xx. 26.) He, also, afterward showed himself again to them at the sea of Tiberias, which was in Galilee, and certainly not less than sixty or seventy miles from Jerusalem (xxi. 1.) Nay, he was seen of the

Had the Evangelists been impostors, they would have written with more caution, and avoided every appearance of contradiction. The mention of their inspiration is here purposely omitted: both because the Deist would reject such a suggestion with scorn; and the evidence contained in the Gospels is competent to prove the Christian religion worthy of all acceptance, whether their writers were inspired or not.

IX.

‘There was no such book,’ the Deist asserts, ‘as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.’ This is an assertion calculated to mislead common readers. The real case is as follows: The New Testament consists of twenty-seven parts; concerning seven of which (*viz.* the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of James, the second of Peter, the second and third of John, that of Jude, and the Revelation) there being at first some doubts, the question whether they should be received or not, was probably decided like other questions concerning opinions, in a council consisting of the best theologians of their time, by vote. The other twenty parts were owned as canonical at all times, and by all Christians. Before the middle of the second century, as we learn from Mosheim, the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were read in every Christian society throughout the world. The four Gospels in particular, we are assured, were collected during the life of St. John: and the others were, probably, gathered together about the same time; as the multiplication of spurious writings, full of pious

Apostles after his death *forty days* (Acts i. 3.) instead of ‘four.’ Surely, after all this, the readers of Paine cannot but be upon their guard as to the credit due to his assertions, however bold and improper. The Faustus whom he afterward quotes with approbation, and whom Michaëlis pronounces not only ignorant of the Greek language, but illiterate in the highest degree, contended among other things (it seems) that ‘the Gospel of St. Matthew could not have been written by St. Matthew himself, because he is always mentioned in it in the third person!’

frauds and fabulous wonders, rendered it necessary for the rulers of the Church to use all possible diligence in separating from them such works as were truly apostolical and divine. It might, indeed, easily be shown that presumptively the Gospels, and certainly some of St. Paul's Epistles, were known to Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the contemporaries of the Apostles; since these men could not, of course, quote or refer to books, which did not exist. Whether they were actually combined into one volume, or not, is a matter of no importance whatever.

The Deist, before he finally relinquishes his attack upon the historical part of the New Testament, objects to the phrase *three days and three nights**, as applied to our Saviour's being *in the heart of the earth*. Yet this only means three days; as in Genesis the expression, *forty days and forty nights*, means only *forty days* (vii. 12. 17.) And Jesus was *in the heart of the earth* on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; in the first and last, a part of the day (as usual with writers of all nations) being put for the whole.

In proceeding to the Epistles of St. Paul, the Deist says, 'that Apostle declares he had not believed what was told of the Resurrection and the Ascension.' Where does he make this declaration? He had persecuted the disciples, it is true; but so did the High Priest and all *the Senate of the children of Israel*†, though they neither denied the reality of the miracles wrought by Peter and the Apostles, nor contradicted their testimony concerning the Resurrection and the Ascension.

The Deist says, 'the writer of them, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument.' He does not: on the contrary, he in many places affirms, that 'his doctrine was not taught him by man, or any invention of his own: requiring the ingenuity of argument to support it‡.'

The Deist says, 'that writer does not pretend to have been a witness of the story of the Resurrection.' No: but he affirms that he was a witness of the Resurrection

* Matt. xii. 40.

Acts v. 21.

† Gal. i. 11, &c.

itself;—*He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time* *.

‘The story of his being struck to the ground, as he was journeying to Damascus,’ the Deist says, ‘has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary.’ But surely it is somewhat extraordinary at least, that a man even struck by lightning should retain at the very time full possession of his understanding; should hear a voice issuing from the lightning, speaking to him in the Hebrew tongue, calling him by his name, and entering into conversation with him †. ‘His companions,’ it is added, ‘appear not to have suffered in the same manner!’—the greater the wonder, if it were a common storm, that he alone should be hurt, and yet (with the exception of being struck blind) so little hurt as to be able immediately to walk into Damascus! So difficult is it to oppose truth by an hypothesis.

Men, whose characters have in them a great deal of violence and fanaticism like that of Paul, as the Deist asserts, are ‘never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach.’ So says the Deist. Lord Lyttelton—not a lying Bible-prophet, a stupid Evangelist, or an *a b ab* Priest; but a learned layman, whose illustrious rank received splendour from his talents, says: “I think the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, is of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation.”

The Deist asserts, the Apostle ‘sets out to prove the resurrection of *the same* body.’ Let him produce the passage. Mr. Locke, who had read his epistles with at least as much attention and acuteness as any Deist whatever, does “not remember any place where the resurrection of *the same* body is so much as mentioned.” ‘As a matter of choice, forsooth, the Deist had rather have a better body.’ And so he will: his *natural* body *will be raised a spiritual body, and his corruptible will put on incorruption* †. ‘Every animal,’ he adds, ‘excels us in something.’ On the contrary, does not the single circumstance of our exclusively having hands give us an

* 1 Cor. xv. 8.

† Acts xxvi. 14.

1 Cor. xv. 44. 53.

infinite superiority, even in a physical respect, over all the animals of the creation ?

From a caterpillar's passing into a torpid state resembling death, and afterward appearing a splendid butterfly, and from the (supposed !) consciousness of existence which the animal had in these different states, the Deist asks ; ' Why must I believe, that the resurrection of *the same* body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter ?' And where is it said in Scripture, that it is ?

He next pronounces the sublime extract from 1 Cor. xv. introduced in our burial-service, which is one of the finest compositions that ever occupied the mind of man, a ' doubtful jargon, as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral.' O ye men of low condition ! pressed down, as ye often are, by accumulated burthens of calamity, what thought you on hearing this passage read at the interment of your parent or your child ? Did it appear to you a ' doubtful jargon ?' No : you understood from it, that you would all *be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump* ; and that, if (notwithstanding profane attempts to subvert your faith) you continue *steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, your labour shall not be in vain*.

Proud of a wretched modicum of science, the Deist now presumes to correct St. Paul for saying, *one star differeth from another star in glory* ; and informs us, he ought to have said, ' in distance.' Upon what basis does he rest his assumption, that the stars are *equal* in magnitude, and placed at *different* distances ? He cannot prove, that they are not *different* in magnitude, and placed at *equal* distances ; though none of them may be so near to the earth, as to have any sensible annual parallax. It moves one's indignation, to see a little smattering in philosophy set against the veracity of an apostle.

' Sometimes,' the Deist remarks, ' Paul affects to be a naturalist, and to prove (he might more properly have said, *illustrate*) his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. *Thou fool*, says he, *that which thou*

sowest is not quickened, except it die. To which one might reply, in the Apostle's own language, "Thou fool Paul, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die not." Every husbandman in Corinth would indisputably understand St. Paul's phrase in a popular sense; and would agree with him that, as from an apparently-rotten grain of wheat God raises the root, the stem, the leaves, and the ear of a new plant, so from the apparently-rotten corpse he might also raise a new body. Our Saviour's expression about a corn of wheat, *If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit* *, proves that the Jews thought the *death* of the grain necessary to its reproduction.

'Whether the Fourteen Epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not' is, according to the Deist, 'a matter of indifference.' Surely, on the other hand, their genuineness is a matter of the greatest importance. If indeed they were written by him, as there is unquestionable proof that they were, it will be difficult for any man, upon fair principles of sound reasoning, to deny that the Christian Religion is true. The argument stands thus:—St. Paul wrote several letters to those whom in different countries he had converted to Christianity, in which he distinctly affirms two things: first, that he had wrought miracles in their presence; and, secondly, that many of themselves had received the gift of tongues, and other miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. These persons must have certainly known, whether in either respect he spoke the truth, or not. And would Paul, a man confessedly of good abilities, have sent public letters full of falsehoods, which could not fail to be detected immediately upon perusal? Yet, if either of these affirmations is correct, the Christian Religion must be true †.

The Deist now closes his observations by remarking,

* John xii. 24.

† See Gal. iii. 2. 5. 1 Thess. i. 5. 1 Cor. ii. 4. And Corinth, in particular, was an enlightened city. How gladly would any of the factions, there opposed to him, have laid hold of declarations even of doubtful veracity? The genuineness and authenticity of both the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul has been unanswerably established by one of the very ablest books in the English language, Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*. F. W.

that 'if the Bible (meaning the Old Testament) and Testament should hereafter fall, it is not he that has been the occasion.' The Bible, he may rest assured, which has withstood the learning of Porphyry and the power of Julian, the genius of Bolingbroke, and the wit of Voltaire, will not fall by the sophistries above adduced against it. He has barbed anew, indeed, the blunted arrows of former adversaries; he has feathered them with blasphemy and ridicule, dipped them in his deadliest poison, aimed them with his utmost skill, and shot them against the shield of faith with his greatest vigour—but, scarcely reaching the mark, they have fallen to the ground without a stroke.

X.

In conclusion the Deist asserts, generally, that 'admitting revelation to be a possible thing, the thing so revealed is revelation to the person only to whom it is made. His account of it to another is not revelation. There is no possible criterion, whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells.' This is false. A real Miracle, performed in attestation of it, is a certain criterion. The reason why we believe Jesus speaking in the Gospel, and disbelieve Mahomet speaking in the Koran, is—that Jesus in the presence of thousands wrought numerous miracles, which the most bitter and watchful of his enemies could not disallow, and Mahomet wrought no miracles at all. Nor is a miracle the only criterion. For again, if a series of Prophets should through a course of many centuries predict the appearance of a certain person, at a precise time, for a particular end; and at the time predicted a person should appear, in whom all the circumstances previously announced were exactly accomplished; such a completion of prophecy would be a criterion of the truth of the revelation, which that person was commissioned to promulge. Or if a person should now say, as many a false prophet is daily saying, that 'he had a commission to declare the will of God;' and as a proof his veracity should predict, that 'after his death he would rise from the dead on the third day;

the completion of such a prophecy would be an indisputable criterion of the truth of his communications.

‘What is it,’ the Deist asks, ‘that the Bible teaches us?’ The prophet Micah shall answer him: it teaches us to *do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God* *. It inculcates justice, mercy, and piety; not, as he asserts, ‘rapine, cruelty, and murder!’

And ‘what is it,’ he farther asks, ‘that the Testament teaches us?’ Not the gross lesson, which he asserts; but that all, *who have done good, shall rise unto the resurrection of life; and all, who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation* †. The moral precepts of the Gospels are so well fitted to promote the happiness of mankind in this world, and to prepare human nature for the enjoyment of future blessedness, that one is surprised to hear the Deist object to what he calls the ‘fragments of morality, irregularly and thinly scattered in these books.’ *As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise* ‡. Is this ‘a fragment of morality?’ Is it not rather the vigorous root, from which every branch of social obligation may be derived? It is from the Gospels, and from the Gospels alone, that we learn the importance of these obligations. Acts of benevolence and brotherly love may be to an unbeliever voluntary acts: to a Christian, they are indispensable duties. Is a new commandment no part of Revealed Religion? *A new commandment I give unto you, ‘That ye love one another* §.

Two precepts the Deist particularises, as inconsistent with the dignity and the nature of man; that of not resenting injuries, and that of loving enemies. Yet who, but the Deist, ever interpreted literally the proverbial phrase; *If a man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also* ||? Did Jesus himself do so, when the officer of the High Priest smote him? Is it not evident, that only a proneness to exact revenge for every trifling offence is here forbidden? And as to loving enemies, is it not explained elsewhere to mean, doing them all the good in our power? Instead of ‘loving in

* Micah vi. 8.

† John v. 29.

‡ Luke vi. 31.

§ John xiii. 34.

|| Matt. v. 39

proportion to the injury, which (if it could be done) would be offering a premium for a crime;’ is it not an injunction to emulate the benevolence of the Deity himself, who *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good* ?

‘ It has been the scheme of the Christian church,’ the Deist asserts, ‘ to hold man in ignorance of his Creator, as it is of government to hold him in ignorance of his rights.’ Will any honest man of plain sense admit, that this representation in either particular is true ? When he attends the service of the Church, are not the public prayers in which he joins, the lessons which are read to him, and the sermons which he hears—all calculated to impress upon his mind a deep conviction of the mercy, the justice, the holiness, the wisdom, and the power of God ? Should the Deist’s scheme indeed take place, and men no longer believe their Bible, they would soon become as ignorant of their Creator, as all the world was when God called Abraham from his kindred. They would bow down to stocks and stones, and *their mouths would kiss their hands* (as was done in the time of Job, and is done by the poor African at present) *if they beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness* * ; or, returning to the worship of Jupiter and Bacchus and Venus, they would copy in the profligacy of their own lives the impurities of their gods.

And what design has ‘ government,’ especially in this empire, to ‘ hold man in ignorance of his rights ?’ None whatever. All wise statesmen are persuaded that, the more men know of their just rights, the better subjects they will become. Enlightened subjects are, not from necessity but choice, the firmest friends of good government. The people of Great Britain know that they have a right to be free, not only from the capricious tyranny of any one man’s will, but also from the far more afflicting despotism of republican factions ; and it is this very knowledge, which attaches the respectable and sensible majority of them to the constitution of their country. The government does not desire, that men should remain in ignorance of their rights : but it both

* Job xxxi. 26, 27.

desires and requires, that they shall not disturb the public peace under vain pretences; that they shall make themselves acquainted, not merely with the rights, but with the duties also, of men in civil society. Of these rights one of the principal is, the right of property. Does government 'hold any man in ignorance of this right?' On the contrary, is it not it's chief care to ascertain and to defend it? Utterly hostile must every good man be to that spurious philosophy, that democratic insanity, which would equalise all fortunes and level all distinctions—fortunes and distinctions, arising from superior probity, learning, eloquence, skill, courage, or other excellences; forming the very blood and nerves of the body politic; and absolutely essential, not only to it's well-being, but to it's actually being at all.

We discern the wisdom and the power of God even in the little, which we are enabled to comprehend, of the material system of the universe; and we trace his goodness in having filled so much of it, as lies within our limited ken, with sensitive beings capable (in their respective orders) of enjoying the comforts prepared for them by his providence. And why should we not contemplate this goodness in the redemption, as well as in the preservation, of the world? The Deist rejects with contempt the history of Man's Fall, and his consequent liability to death. Yet he finds, by lamentable observation, that death does reign universally. He refuses, likewise, to believe that Christ *hath overcome death*, and redeemed mankind.—Why? Because, forsooth, he cannot account for the propriety of this redemption! But what is there, that he can account for? Not for the germination of a blade of corn, or the fall of a leaf of the forest. And will he refuse to eat of the fruits of the earth, because God has not given him wisdom equal to his own? What father of a family can make level to the apprehension of his infant children all the views of happiness, which his paternal goodness is preparing for them; the utility of reproof, correction, instruction, &c. in forming their minds to piety, temperance, and probity? We are, at present, in the very infancy of our existence. What discipline may be necessary to generate in us the qualities essential to our well-being

throughout all eternity, we know not: whether God could or could not, consistently with the general good, have forgiven the transgression of Adam without any atonement, we know not: whether the malignity of sin be not so opposite to the general good that it cannot be forgiven so long as the mind retains a propensity to it, we know not. So that, even if there should have been greater difficulty in comprehending the mode of God's moral government of mankind, there would have been no solid reason for doubting it's rectitude. And, if we consider man but as one small member of an immense community of free and intelligent beings of different orders, regulated by laws productive of the greatest possible good to the whole system, still more justly may we suspect our capacity of comprehending that moral government, as it refers to the universe at large.

Even the naked creed of the Deist is not without depths unfathomable by it's arrogant votary. What does he think, for instance, of an uncaused cause of every thing? What does he think of a Being, who has no relation to *time*, not being older to-day than he was yesterday; or to *space*, not being a part here and a part there, or a whole any where? What does he think of an omniscient Being, who cannot know the future actions of a man; or, if he can know them, what of the contingency of human actions; and, without this contingency, what of the distinction between vice and virtue, sin and duty? What, in short, does he think of the existence of evil, moral and natural, in the work of a Being infinitely powerful and wise and good? There would be no end of such perplexing (but, happily, unimportant) questions.

What a blessing it is to creatures, with powers so narrow as those of man, to have that Being himself for their instructor, in every thing which it most concerns them to know—not as to the origin of arts or the depths of science, the subtilties of logic or the mysteries of metaphysics, the sublimities of poetry or the niceties of criticism; but—what will become of them after death, and what they must do whilst they live here, in order to render their life hereafter happy. ‘That thing called Christianity,’ as the Deist scoffingly speaks, the Gospel of

Jesus Christ, has *brought life and immortality to light* *. These are tremendous truths to bad men: they cannot be received, and reflected on, even by the best with indifference.

The generality of unbelievers, in the higher stations of society, are such from want of due instruction on the subject of religion. Engaged from their youth in the pursuits of worldly honours, or wealth, or pleasure, they have neither leisure nor inclination to study the volume of a faith founded, not upon authority, but upon sober investigation. These men are soon startled by frivolous cavils, which they find themselves incompetent to answer; and the loose morality of the age (so opposite to 'Christian perfection') co-operating with their want of scriptural knowledge, they presently get rid of the scanty relics of their nursery-creed. To them, I fear, this little book will never penetrate, or prove acceptable. But there is a numerous and respectable class, the manufacturers and tradesmen of the kingdom, who are in general desirous of information. If it should chance to fall into their hands, and they should think any of the Deist's objections imperfectly answered; they are entreated to impute the imperfection to brevity, to the desire of avoiding learned disquisitions, to inadvertency, to inability—to any thing, in short, rather than the impossibility of perfectly answering them all. The youth likewise of both sexes, who (unhappily for their prospects in *the life that now is*, as well as in *that which is to come* †) may have imbibed the poison of infidelity, are implored to believe that all their religious doubts may certainly be removed, whether such a blessed result has been accomplished in these pages or not. God grant that the rising generation of this land, favoured as it is in most respects beyond all other lands, may be preserved from *that evil heart of unbelief*, which deluged France for so many years with blood; and that neither a neglected education, nor domestic irreligion, nor evil communication and the fashion of a licentious world

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

† 1 Tim. iv. 8.

may ever induce them to tread under foot the Son of God, nor count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, or do despite unto the Spirit of Grace *.

* Heb. x. 29.

THE END.

THE
PRINCIPAL PARTS

OF

Bishop Butler's

' *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the
Constitution and Course of Nature,*'

ABRIDGED;

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

All things are double one against another, and God hath made
nothing imperfect. (Ecclesiasticus xxii. 24.)

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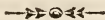
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Bishop BUTLER, in his invaluable 'Analogy' (says his Editor, Bishop HALLIFAX) instead of indulging in idle speculations, how the world might possibly have been better than it is; or, forgetful of the difference between hypothesis and fact, attempting to explain the divine economy with respect to intelligent creatures from preconceived notions of his own—first inquires what the constitution of Nature, as made known to us in the way of experiment, actually is; and from this, now seen and acknowledged, endeavours to form a judgement of that larger constitution which Religion discovers to us. If the Dispensation of Providence we are now under, considered as inhabitants of this world and having a temporal interest to secure in it, be found on examination to be analogous to and of a piece with that farther Dispensation which relates to us as designed for another world, in which we have an eternal interest depending on our behaviour here; if both may be traced up to the same general laws, and appear to be carried on according to the same plan of administration; the fair presumption is, that both proceed from one and the same Author. And if the principal parts objected to in this latter Dispensation be similar to, and of the same kind with, what we certainly experience under the former; the objections, being clearly inconclusive in one case, because contradicted by plain fact, must in all reason be allowed to be inconclusive also in the other.

This way of arguing from what is acknowledged to what is disputed, from things known to other things that resemble them, from that part of the divine establishment which is exposed to our view to that more important one which lies beyond it, is on all hands confessed to be just. By this method Sir ISAAC NEWTON has unfolded the System of Nature: by the same method Bishop BUTLER has explained the System of Grace, and thus "formed and concluded a happy alliance between Faith and Philosophy."

It should be remarked however, to use the concluding words of the same perspicuous Prefacer, that Morality and Religion, when treated as sciences each accompanied with difficulties of it's own, can neither of them be understood as they ought without a very peculiar attention. But Morality and Religion are not merely to be studied as sciences, or as being speculatively true: they are to be regarded in another and a higher light, as the rule of life and manners, as containing authoritative directions by which to regulate our faith and practice. And in this view, the infinite importance of them considered, it can never be an indifferent matter whether they be received or rejected. For both claim to be the voice of God; and whether they be so or not, cannot be known till their claims be impartially examined. If they indeed come from him, we are bound to conform to them at our peril; nor is it left to our choice, whether we will submit to the obligations which they impose upon us or not: for submit to them we must in such a sense, if guilty, as to incur the

punishments denounced by both against wilful disobedience to their injunctions.

I need scarcely remark, that we here presuppose the Author of Nature, invested with a will and character which our whole constitution necessarily leads us to deem moral and just and good, will act universally upon principles in harmony and consistency with each other.

It may be added, that Archbishop Secker, in the first three of his Posthumous Sermons, did not think it unworthy of his time and talents to give clearness (as he has done, in a manner entirely his own) to arguments, which in the 'Analogy' itself are sometimes above the comprehension of common readers. And this, says a respectable writer, will "not be thought surprising, when it is known that he was perfectly familiar with that incomparable production, as well as intimately connected with the Author of it; that he revised it, critically and carefully, before it was published; and that, obscure as some parts of it may still remain, we now see it in a much more perfect and intelligible form, than it would have appeared in without such review." The Primate had previously rendered his friend a similar service in assisting him to prepare for the press his 'Fifteen Sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel,' a volume even by the concession of Dr. BUTLER himself containing Discourses "very abstruse and difficult, or if you please, obscure;" in the last of which, 'Upon the Ignorance of Man,' were introduced the rudiments of the principle more copiously developed in his subsequent great work.

That work, on it's appearance, was justly received with the highest applause; is, to this day, universally regarded as a master-piece of the kind; and has been long recommended to Students of Divinity, both in the Universities and in Dissenting Academies, as the best exercise of their reasoning powers.

I should leave this preliminary notice discreditably incomplete, if I omitted to notice that for the plan of the work—the work itself I had resolved upon—and for a considerable portion of it's execution I am indebted to one, whom I know not whether to congratulate more on the strength and clearness of his head, or the uprightness and integrity of his heart.

June 11, 1820.

F. W.

THE
PRINCIPAL PARTS, &c.



DIALOGUE I.



Minister. **I** AM glad to meet with you, Neighbour. Ere this, I hope you have got rid of the scruples infused into your mind by the infidel pamphlets which have been lately circulated with so much mischievous industry, respecting the inspiration of Scripture. In our former conversation, you appeared to me to be forcibly impressed by the united evidence, external and internal, in it's favour.

Parishioner. So I was, Sir; yet still, to my great concern, I often feel myself harassed with new doubts, or rather with certain old objections of my evil companions. But I am almost ashamed to mention them to you.

M. O pray produce them, and put them in the strongest way you can. I never debate with cavillers: but, as I believe you to be a sincere inquirer after truth, I shall listen to what you have to say with the utmost attention.

P. The Doctrines of Scripture are what I chiefly allude to. Of these, several are plain and edifying; but, in general, they are mysterious (I had almost said, irrational) and treat upon subjects totally foreign to our observation and experience in common life. Now this, I own, staggers me: and I cannot help asking; 'Why, if the Bible is indeed divinely inspired, it's contents should be so little adapted to our capacities, and of course to our instruction?'

M. It certainly does contain many things, my friend, *above* our reason, but none *contrary* to it: and, as to our imperfect conceptions of the nature of spiritual things, this ought rather to humble us, and to make us thankful for the help of Revelation, than to put us upon doubting of it's truth. I hope, however, to satisfy you, that *there is a close*

resemblance between the concerns of the present life, and what the Bible teaches us about a future one. But first I must know, what are the particular Doctrines, which appear to you so unreasonable.

P. Well then, Sir, one thing taught in the Bible is, the existence of our souls after death in a state of separation from our bodies. This seems to be absolutely incredible, when we reflect upon the intimate connexion between the soul and the body during life, and their apparently necessary dependence upon each other.

M. No, my friend, surely not 'absolutely incredible.' For is it not quite as surprising, that we should now have a being, though once we had none? Consider but the various changes, through which we pass from infancy to old age. Look at the transitions, which are continually occurring in other parts of the animal world—birds, for instance, bursting from their shells, worms becoming flies, &c.; and then say, why it is 'absolutely incredible,' that farther alterations should take place in man.

P. But, Sir, the changes you mention are confined to bodies; and therefore prove nothing, in my opinion, with respect to the soul's existing in a state of separation from the body.

M. Can we not then argue, from the circumstance of dreams, that the soul may be awake and active, while the body is sunk in sleep? By them we find, that we are at present possessed of a latent (and what would otherwise have been an unimagined, unknown) power of perceiving sensible objects in as strong and lively a manner without our external organs of sense, as with them. In the case of dying persons, also, the soul is often strikingly vigorous, when the body is in it's last stage of languor and decay: and we know, that lopping off the limbs—nay, destroying a considerable part even of some of the most important portions of the body—does not injure, or affect, the soul. Both you and I have, in fact, already several times over insensibly lost a great part, or perhaps the whole of our bodies, according to certain established laws of nature: yet we remain the same living agents. Why then, may we not also remain the same, when we shall lose the whole by another established law of nature, death?

P. I must own, I do not see any satisfactory reason to

conclude the contrary. But what can you point out in the world around us analogous to the doctrine, which teaches us that our happiness or misery in that future state of existence will depend on our conduct in this ?

M. Much. Consider well the present state of things ; and you will perceive that all we enjoy, and much of what we suffer, is put in our own power. We are generally happy or miserable, as our behaviour is virtuous or vicious. Now natural government by rewards and punishments as much implies natural trial, as moral government does moral trial. By 'natural government' I mean the system, upon which God has annexed pleasure to some actions and pain to others, and given us notice of such his appointments beforehand. And we see accordingly that many, blinded and deceived by inordinate passion, are so taken up with present gratifications against every suggestion of prudence, as to have little or no feeling of inevitable consequences; or regard to temporal interest: others are forcibly carried away, as it were, against their better judgement and feeble resolutions; and not a few shamelessly avow their mere will and pleasure to be their law of life, though they foresee that a course of vicious extravagance must infallibly be their ruin. Substitute now, in the above paragraph, *future* for *temporal*, and *virtue* for *prudence*; and this description will equally fit our state of trial in our religious capacity. On the contrary, do we not find that, by a moderate degree of care, we may generally pass our days here on earth in tolerable ease and satisfaction ?

P. Very true, Sir. I admit that, in the course of nature, it certainly is so: but I do not distinctly perceive the course of nature connected with a future state, in such a manner as to render it probable that correspondent consequences will follow in the world to come.

M. If you view the concerns of both worlds as under the control of One, *with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning*,* you will dismiss all doubt upon the subject: as his natural and moral government, we cannot but conclude, will necessarily be conducted upon uniform principles. To this, indeed, our own consciences in some measure bear testimony. If these are not absolutely har-

* Jam. i. 17.

dened, vicious practices will ever be accompanied by uneasiness of mind and apprehension of punishment, while an upright behaviour as certainly produces security and peace.

P. Yet men are not always happy or miserable in this life, according to their moral conduct. Vice is often prosperous, and virtue pursued by suffering and disappointment.

M. Man, my friend, sees a part, and only a part. Yet even in that part we frequently see enough of the general government of God, to convince us that he is not indifferent to human actions; and to render it at least highly probable that a time will arrive, when his wisdom and justice will be cleared up, and men will be dealt with according to their present behaviour. There are undoubtedly the wisest reasons, why the world should be governed by general laws; and under such government the results, which you have stated, will now and then perhaps unavoidably follow. But all this cannot drown the voice of nature in the conduct of Providence, plainly declaring itself in favour of virtue. The natural conclusion of the human mind is, that the governor of the world will, in the bestowing of his rewards and punishments, proceed upon the principles of what we call 'distributive justice.' Ruling as he does by fixed principles and ordinances, and having endued us with capacities of foreseeing the good and bad consequences of our behaviour, he obviously indicates to us some sort of moral government. From the natural course of things vicious actions, we see, are to a great degree punished as mischievous to society, not only by actual inflictions, but also by the fear and apprehension of them, which is itself frequently no inconsiderable suffering. But farther: Virtue, as such, naturally procures considerable advantages to the virtuous; and Vice, as such, great inconvenience and even misery to the vicious. I might instance this, in the immediate effects respectively produced upon the mind and temper; as, also, the fear of future punishment and the peaceful hopes of a better life, which generate present uneasiness and satisfaction in the mind, and cannot be got rid of even by those who have thought most deeply upon the subject. To these may, likewise, be added the countenance and discountenance of all the honest and good, in public as well as private stations, with

other minor considerations. If happiness and misery then are occasionally distributed by other rules, this may probably be in the way of mere discipline, or as the accidental consequences (to be eventually compensated) of the above-mentioned general laws. There is, lastly, in the very nature of things, a necessary tendency in virtue and vice to their being finally rewarded and punished in a far more perfect degree than is at present the case; as that tendency is now obstructed in various respects by hindrances artificial, accidental, and temporary.

P. You have certainly, Sir, put the probability of such a conclusion in a very strong light. I begin to understand what the Bible says, about our being placed here in a state of probation to fit us for futurity.

M. Yes; and you will perceive a great resemblance between our situation in this respect, and what we experience in the concerns of ordinary life. A state of probation implies trial, difficulties, and danger: and we know that what is for our present interest is generally offered to our acquisition in such sort, as that we are in danger of missing it, from temptations to neglect or act contrary to it; and that without attention and self-denial we often lose the advantages, which by a different conduct we might probably have secured.

A state of probation implies, also, moral discipline and improvement. In this respect, likewise, our preparation for a future state is extremely similar to what we undergo in the present one. Thus childhood is a state of trial for youth, youth for manhood, and manhood for old age. Strength of body and mind are attained by degrees, and neither of them without the continued exercise of our powers from infancy. Nor, if we were unable to discern how the present life could be our preparation for another, would this be any objection against its credibility. We do not discern, how food and sleep contribute to the growth of the body. Children never think, on the one hand, that their darling sports give them health and strength; nor, on the other, that these sports may be pursued to a hazardous excess, and therefore require the hand of restraint: nor, indeed, can they comprehend the use of many parts of discipline, which however are essential to qualify them for the business of mature age.

We might, also, infer our present situation to be a state of discipline, in a religious sense, from the great wickedness of mankind; even from those imperfections, of which the best are conscious; from our proneness to desire forbidden gratifications, and from the various temptations by which we are surrounded, &c.—all strongly evincing the necessity of recollection and self-government.

To be a little more distinct. Allurements to what is wrong, difficulties in the discharge of duty, our not being able to maintain a course of uniform rectitude without perpetual thought and care, and the opportunities (real, or apparent) of indulging our passions by unlawful means, when lawful ones do not present themselves—all these things, with many others which might be mentioned, are what peculiarly adapt the world to be a school of discipline; because they render watchfulness, resolution, and self-denial absolutely necessary to our improvement in virtue and piety. Neither can the fact, that the discipline of the world does not actually improve the generality, be urged as a proof that it was not intended to do so. For of the numerous seeds of vegetables and bodies of animals, which are put in the way of attaining to a certain state of natural perfection, we do not see perhaps that one in a million actually does attain to it. Far the greater part of both decay in immaturity. Yet no one will therefore deny that the rest, which do attain to it, were designed to do so. The appearance, indeed (it may be remarked) of such an amazing waste in nature is to us as unaccountable as—what is much more terrible—the present and future ruin of so many moral agents by themselves, that is, by vice.

P. But, surely, the whole of this trouble and danger might have been avoided, by our having been made at once the creatures and the characters which we were to be.

M. It is in vain to object, what *might have been*. We are inquiring into facts: and we may perceive from experience, that what we were to *be* was to be the effect of what we would *do*. The general conduct of Nature is, not to save us from trouble or danger, but to make us capable of going through them, and to put it upon us to do so. Acquirements of our own experience and habits are the natural supply to our deficiencies, and security against our dangers.

P. But, Sir, if things have been thus contrived beforehand, and could not have happened in any other way, of what use is Religion to mankind?

M. A little reflexion, neighbour, will teach you that this is an idle refinement, and has nothing to do with the subject. Even if we were to admit the doctrine of Necessity in it's strongest sense as speculatively true, we shall find the conclusion with respect to ourselves exactly the same; since that doctrine by no means implies, that God will not render his creatures happy or miserable according to their conduct. So it is in God's natural government of the world, in which happiness and misery are not our *fate* in any such sense, as not to be the consequences of our behaviour. They *are* the consequences of it; and the common sense and experience of mankind show, that they feel it right it should be so. Men are rewarded, or punished, for their actions (punished for actions mischievous to society as such, for vicious actions as such) by the natural instrumentality of each other, under the conduct of Providence: and it is reasonable to infer, that this will be the case in the course of his eternal government. Unless we are prepared to say, that God ought to have made man happy without means, we shall not deny him the choice of his own means.

P. But still, Sir, when we see the evil and disorder which is permitted in the world, and the lamentable consequences which the Bible assures us will follow in their train, it is natural to distrust it's doctrines, and even to dispute the wisdom and goodness of the government in question.

M. O no: the Bible relates matters of fact, and the truth of a fact has nothing to do with the wisdom and goodness of it. You must frequently have observed with surprise, in God's natural government of the world, that things seemingly the most insignificant are necessary conditions to other things of the greatest importance. This strongly shows the credibility, that his moral government may be of the same description. The chain of causes and consequences are both ways infinitely beyond human ken. Hence is supplied a general answer to all objections against the justice and goodness of that government. Again, in the ordinary events of life, means extremely undesirable often

conduce to bring about ends so desirable, as greatly to over-balance the disagreeableness of the means: and in these cases it is not reason, but experience, which shows us that those means are thus conducive. In many cases, also, means are employed which, prior to experience, we should have expected to have had a quite opposite tendency. Is it not then equally credible, that what appears liable to objections in the moral dispensations of Providence—such as, putting our misery to a considerable extent in each other's power, making men to a certain degree liable to vice, &c. may, eventually, prove similarly productive of an over-balance of good? Neither is it any presumption against this, that we do not always foresee, or witness, such results. The very things, which we call 'irregularities', may be merely means of accomplishing in some mysterious way wise and good ends; perhaps the only means, under existing arrangements, by which these wise and good ends are capable of being accomplished.

P. I fear indeed, Sir, I have been too hasty in my objections. We are poor short-sighted creatures at the best.

M. Yes, my friend; and our ignorance is, after all, the proper and satisfactory answer to these objections. Even in the common course of Nature, we cannot give the whole account of any one event. After tracing it's causes, ends, and necessary adjuncts to the utmost of our power, we shall still find that, had it not been connected with something else both past and present, it possibly could not have been at all. To say nothing, therefore, on the subject of the general laws regulating the divine administration, how much more difficult must it be to comprehend the system of God's moral government, which extends to both worlds!

You see then,

1. That many things prove the idea of our ceasing to exist at death to be palpably absurd. Our being destined to pass into another state of life involves nothing paradoxical, any more than that the child in the womb should pass into this. Our being now, indeed, living existences affords a strong probability that we shall continue so: nor has the contrary conclusion any other ground than the idle imagination that our gross bodies are ourselves, or that from the circumstance of the body and the soul mutually

(though not invariably) affecting each other, the dissolution of the former must necessarily be the destruction of the latter. Even if that event could be supposed to suspend the exercise of the faculties of the soul, such suspension would by no means imply extinction, as we may be convinced by sleep or a swoon.

2. We find that, amidst this unbounded prospect of futurity opened to our hopes and fears, there is no presumption whatever against the inference of our eternal interests depending upon our present behaviour: as we perceive our present interest does so; and perceive, likewise, that the happiness and misery naturally annexed to our actions frequently follow those actions at a considerable distance. In what relates both to this world and the next, in short, we are equally trusted with ourselves—our own conduct, and our own welfare.

3. We discover, in the very confusion and disorder of the world, the rudiments and beginnings of a moral government of it; as deducible particularly from the comparative satisfaction and uneasiness, which are the natural consequences of a virtuous and a vicious course of life, the love of good characters and dislike of bad ones, &c.

4. We infer from the temptations to be unfaithful to our temporal interests, and our consequent difficulties and danger, arising out of the constitution of Nature (especially, as coupled with that course of things which is owing to mankind) that there may be similar difficulties and danger, with regard to our chief and final good.

5. That our present state was intended to be a school of moral discipline, is rendered highly credible by the considerations that we are plainly made for improvement of all kinds, and that by the general appointment of Providence we are ordained to cultivate practical principles, and form within ourselves habits of action (in our preparatory stages, for instance, of childhood and youth) in order to become fit for what we were unfit for before.

6. It is obvious, from the evidence as it were of experience, that all objections against Religion, founded on the scheme of necessity, are delusive and vain: and

7. It appears that God, in the incomprehensibleness of his natural government of the world, has supplied an answer

to all our narrow and purblind objections against his moral government.

Surely then the credibility of Religion, arising from experience and the facts above-stated, is fully sufficient in reason to recommend to mankind the general practice of virtue and piety, under the serious apprehension of a righteous administration established in nature and a future judgement in consequence of it: particularly, when we reflect how very questionable it is, whether any thing at all can be gained by vice; how unquestionably little, as well as precarious, the pleasures and profits of it are at the best; and how soon they must be parted with at the longest.

P. Very true, Sir: but I will trespass upon your patience no longer at present. You have pointed out to me matter for much and serious reflexion; and, if I do not profit from it, assuredly it must be my own fault.

DIALOGUE II.

Parishioner. Oh! Sir, I am glad to meet with you again. I have thought deeply upon the subjects of our last conversation; and I am perfectly convinced, both from reason and observation, that the soul is immortal, and that there will be a future state of rewards and punishments.

Minister. You would scarcely ever have doubted either, my friend, but for the perverse and wicked interference of your infidel neighbours: for these points are connected with what is called 'Natural Religion,' and are therefore supposed to be discoverable by the light of reason—a light, however, so sadly obscured by our evil passions, that we ought to feel the utmost gratitude on finding them illustrated in Scripture with such a superior degree of brightness.

P. Yet, alas! Sir, I am far from being relieved from all my difficulties on the head of Religion. Many still press heavily upon my mind.

M. I do not wonder at it. I suppose you allude to these peculiarly Christian doctrines, which unfold the grand Dispensation carried on by the Son and the Spirit of God in order to redeem mankind from their state of guilt and ruin. These are, indeed, purely the subject of Revelation, and could never have been discovered by the mere exercise of our natural faculties.

P. They do, certainly, seem to me to be wrapped up in mystery.

M. *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness!** But so far as these doctrines are propounded to our faith and practice, I think I can convince you that *they are not more unaccountable than many occurrences, which arise in the course of God's natural government of the world.* Pray, therefore, proceed to state your objections to me as fully and freely as before.

P. I own then that, with respect to the general system of Christianity, I remark an inconsistency in it's tenets and an obscurity in it's language, which makes it appear to

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

some persons to be *foolishness*.^{*} It is also, as might have been easily foreseen, the occasion of much enthusiasm and superstition ; and it is, frequently, made to serve the purposes of tyranny and wickedness. Again ; its evidences might have been rendered clearer, and more satisfactory ; and the knowledge of it might have been communicated more early, and diffused more universally. Such views as these are extremely trying to one's belief.

M. But, upon the supposition of a Revelation, is it not likely beforehand, that we should to a considerable extent be incompetent judges of it, and that it would contain many things seemingly liable to great objections ? We cannot be sufficiently acquainted with the secrets of the Divine Government to decide on grounds of reason, previously to such Revelation, what degree of new knowledge it would please God to vouchsafe to mankind ; whether the evidence of this new knowledge would be certain, or highly probable, or doubtful ; whether it would be unfolded at once, or gradually ; whether all men would receive it, with equal clearness and conviction, at the same period or successively ; or even whether it should have been committed to writing, or left to be handed down (and, consequently, corrupted) by verbal tradition.--For we are in no sort judges beforehand by what laws or rules, in what degrees or by what means, it might be expected that God would have conveyed to us similar information upon natural subjects.

If men will be regardless of these things, and pretend to judge of the Scripture by preconceived expectations, the analogy of Nature shows beforehand not only the high credibility that they may, but also the great probability that they will, imagine they have strong objections against it, however really unexceptionable : for so, prior to experience, they would think they had against the circumstances and degrees and whole manner of that instruction, which is afforded by the ordinary course of Nature. Were the instruction, which God affords to brute creatures by instincts and mere propensions, and to mankind by these in conjunction with reason, matter only of probable proof and not of certain observation ; it would in many cases be rejected as incredible, simply from the seeming disproportion

* 1 Cor. i. 8.

tions, limitations, and circumstances of it. For instance: would it not have been thought highly improbable that men should have been so much more capable of discovering, even to certainty, the general laws of matter and the precise magnitudes and motions of the heavenly bodies, than the occasions and cures of distempers, and many other things in which human life seems so much more nearly concerned than in astronomy? And again; that brutes without reason should act, in many respects, with a sagacity and foresight vastly greater than what we have in these respects, would (as a subject of anticipation) have been thought impossible. Yet it is certain, that they do act with such superior foresight, from daily observation. Hence it is highly credible beforehand that, upon supposition God should afford to men some additional instruction by Revelation, it would be in degrees and after manners which we should be apt to fancy not a little objectionable.

P. True, Sir; but surely a Revelation so very imperfect—one, for instance, not put into writing, and thus guarded against a principal source of corruption—would never have answered it's purpose.

M. What purpose do you mean? It would not have answered all the purposes which it has now answered, and in the same degree; but it would have answered others, or the same in different degrees: and which of these was the purpose of God, and best fell in with his general government, we could not at all have pre-determined. This shows that, however objections against the evidences of Christianity deserve to be seriously considered, objections against Christianity itself are in a great measure frivolous. The only questions here are, whether Christianity be a real Revelation, not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for: and whether Scripture be what it claims to be, not whether it be a book of such sort and so promulgated, as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a divine Revelation should be. And therefore neither obscurity, nor seeming inaccuracy of stile, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of the same kind (even though they had been much more considerable in degree, than they really are) could overthrow it's authority—unless the Prophets, the Apostles, or our Lord him-

self had promised, that it should be secure from all these circumstances.

P. But Christianity being represented as an expedient to recover the world from it's state of ruin, and to help in those respects where Nature fails, is it credible that so many ages should have been suffered to elapse before a matter of such infinite importance was made known to mankind, and that then it should have been disclosed to so small a portion of it? or that it should, after all, be so defective, so beset with doubts, and so liable to perversion?

M. Perfectly credible, if we will only admit the light of Nature and that of Revelation to proceed from the same Author. Men are naturally liable to diseases, for which God in his good providence has provided natural remedies: but these remedies, though existing in Nature, lay concealed from mankind for 'many ages,' and are still known only to comparatively few. Their qualities, notwithstanding long and laborious investigation, are often undetected; and their application is precarious. Some of the most useful of them, indeed, have at one time or other incurred contempt and rejection; and, unskilfully or dishonestly administered, may bring on new diseases. Even when administered in the most judicious and upright manner, their success is often doubtful. They are frequently imperceptible, or tardy, in their operation; and, from the regimen usually connected with them, in a large plurality of instances they are disagreeable. Nor are the sick invariably so fortunate, as to be always in the way of them. Many never are so. In short, they are neither certain, perfect, nor universal: and indeed the same principle of arguing, which would lead us to conclude from the divine goodness that they must necessarily be so, would lead us likewise to conclude with equal assurance that there could be no occasion for them, i. e. no diseases, at all: as the necessity of the Christian Dispensation, it may be contended, might also have been superseded by preventing the Fall of Man, so that he should not have stood in any need of a Redeemer. But this mode of objecting is resolvable into principles and goes upon suppositions, which mislead us to think that God would not act, even in his natural government of the world, as we experience he does; or would act, in such and such moral cases, as in like natural cases we experience he does not.

P. If we are to reason from the course of Nature, I own it appears in the highest degree probable, that a divine Revelation might contain many things apparently objectionable. Still, however, these imperfections—for such I must call them—assuredly impeach it's wisdom and goodness.

M. Not, if our inability to comprehend the whole of that Revelation be admitted. And since in the Christian Dispensation we perceive means used to accomplish ends, in the same manner as in God's natural government, we may reasonably infer that both are under the regulation of general laws: in which case, we can no more be authorised to arraign the wisdom or goodness of the one system, than that of the other. For of these general laws, in either respect, we understand in a manner nothing. The laws, by which storms and earthquakes, famine and pestilence become the instruments of destruction to mankind; by which persons, born at such a particular time and place, are of such and such talents, temper, and capacities; by which thoughts, in many instances, come into our minds, &c. &c. are so little known to us, that we call their results 'accidental;' though all reasonable men know plainly that there cannot in reality be any such thing as chance, and refer these results unhesitatingly to the operation of some hidden general laws. This they do from analogy; from finding that general laws, as far as they can discern, regulate the ordinary course of Nature. Hence it is at least credible, that God's miraculous interpositions may have, also, been regulated by general laws of wisdom. That miraculous powers should have been exerted at such times, upon such occasions, in such degrees, [and with regard to such persons, rather than other; that the affairs of the world, after having gone on in their natural course to a certain point, should just at that point miraculously receive a new direction—all this may have been by general laws—laws unknown, indeed, to us; but not more unknown than those, by which it is ordained that some individuals should die as soon as they are born, and others live to extreme old age: that one man should, in understanding or bodily power, far surpass another; with innumerable other things, which (though, as I before observed, we cannot with certainty, or at all, pretend to assign their causes) we deem as much reducible to general laws, as the results of gravitation itself.

P. But, in the plan formed for the redemption of mankind, a long series of intricate means is resorted to ; just as men, for want of understanding or power not being able to come at their ends directly, are forced to go round-about ways, and make use of many perplexed contrivances to arrive at them.

M. And, pray does not the natural course of Providence exhibit similar appearances? In this, according to our manner of conception, God makes use of variety of means (and frequently, in our opinion, tedious means) for the accomplishment of all his ends. The whole of nature, indeed, is a system—not a fixed, but a progressive one ; a system, in which the operation of means often takes up a great length of time, before they produce the intended result. The change of seasons, the ripening of the fruits of the earth, the very history of a flower is an instance of this : and so, in it's various progresses, is human life. Vegetable and animal bodies gradually attain to maturity. The rational agents, which animate the superior classes of these latter bodies, are naturally directed to form each his own character by the gradual gaining of knowledge and experience, and by a long course of action. Our existence is not only successive, as it must of necessity be, but one state of it is appointed by God to be a preparation for another. Thus in the daily course of nature, Providence operates in the very same manner, as in the Dispensation of Christianity.

P. I must acknowledge you have removed my misgivings, as to the general plan of that Dispensation : but there are some particulars in it, which still haunt and harass me.

M. Pray mention them, by all means.

P. The appointment of a Mediator between God and Man is one of them. That we are all involved in a state of guilt and ruin, I must with grief confess. Every thing within and around me confirms what the Bible states upon that head. But I cannot conceive why mercy and help might not have been imparted at once, and without the interference of another. How much more simple would such a process have been ! Whereas the mode of relief said to be actually adopted is contrary, not only to every reasonable expectation which we could have formed on that subject, but also to every thing which we observe in the common course of nature or in human transactions.

M. You surprise me, my friend, by this assertion : as to me it appears that the visible government which God exercises over the world is almost entirely carried on by a system of mediation, whether in the way of justice or of mercy ; nay, that all living creatures are produced, and their lives in infancy preserved, through the instrumentality of others.

P. But, in this particular instance, is it not much more natural to suppose that the remission of our punishment, and our recovering of the Divine favour, would have been made to depend solely upon our own Repentance and Reformation ?

M. Not, if we borrow our ideas from what we see passing in the world about us ; where misery and ruin are frequently the consequences of irregular and disorderly behaviour, even in such cases of rashness and negligence as we scarcely call 'vicious.' Nor will repentance and reformation, or any degree of personal exertion, in many of these cases, prevent such consequences. It is surely then not less credible that, under the same Divine government, the punishment of sin will be proportionally severe and equally irretrievable. For only consider what it is for creatures, moral agents, presumptuously to rebel against a Being of infinite holiness and justice, and to introduce into his kingdom that confusion and wretchedness which mankind have in fact introduced ; to blaspheme their Sovereign Lord ; to contemn his authority, and to be injurious in the degree they are to their fellow-creatures, the creatures of God ! Under such circumstances, is it too much to affirm, that our repentance and reformation would, most probably, be insufficient to avert the dreadful consequences of our transgressions ? How shall he, think you, who can barely with his utmost efforts earn a subsistence, be able to liquidate the debt contracted by the negligence or the profligacy of one fatal day ?

P. But don't you lay too much stress, Sir, upon the inability of mankind to retrieve the effects of their misconduct in the common course of life ? Such cases are, surely, not sufficiently numerous to warrant the inference, which you would draw from them.

M. Alas ! the instances are but too frequent, in which we see persons ruin their fortunes by extravagance and their health by intemperance, and incur the various penal-

ties of the municipal laws. In these cases, will sorrow for the past and good conduct for the future, alone and of themselves, avail to prevent the ordinary consequences of such conduct? On the contrary, men's natural ability of helping themselves is often impaired; or, if not, they are yet forced, in various ways, to be beholden to the assistance of others. Why, then, is it not supposeable that a similar result may take place in our more important capacity, as under God's moral government, and having a more general and future interest depending?

P. I own the force of your observations: and to creatures, involved as we are in the ruinous consequences of sin, such a provision must be desirable beyond measure.

M. So at least the speculations of the wise and the practice of the unwise among the very heathens lead us to conclude. Hence Plato's well-known wish, the wavering creed of Tully, and the propitiatory sacrifices of the whole Pagan world, to which even a dying Socrates chose to conform. Happily for ourselves, in this exigency Revelation removes every apprehension, which might otherwise lay hold upon us; and informs us, that although the Divine government will not admit of pardon immediately and directly upon repentance, or by the sole efficacy of it, yet *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him* (not certainly in a speculative, but a practical sense) *should not perish**—gave him in the same way of goodness, though in degree infinitely heightened, as he provides for particular persons the friendly assistance of their fellow-creatures, when without it their temporal ruin would be the certain consequence of their follies. It elsewhere states, that the Son of God *loved us and gave himself for us*,† with a love which he himself compares to human friendship, though in this instance all comparisons must fall infinitely short of the reality. He interposed in such a manner as was effectual to intercept that punishment, which according to the general laws of the Divine government must otherwise have followed the sins of the world.

Some persons, indeed, profess to disbelieve the doctrine of Christ's atonement and intercession, because they cannot (they say) comprehend it. But as we could

* John iii. 16. † Eph. v. 2. John xv. 12—14. Rom. v. 8.

not have been judges, antecedently to Revelation, whether a Mediator was or was not necessary to prevent the future punishment, and secure the final happiness, of fallen and offending man; so neither could we, as to the whole nature of his office, or what was requisite to be assigned to him in order to accomplish the ends of Providence in the appointment. Such objections are therefore of small account, unless any part of the mediatorial office of Christ could be positively shown not to be requisite or conducive to its proposed ends, or to be in itself unreasonable.

P. One objection I recollect—I assure you, Sir, it is not my own—which seems to be of that positive character, viz. that the doctrine of Christ's being appointed to suffer for the sins of mankind represents God the Father as indifferent, whether he punished the innocent or the guilty.

M. But you must clearly see, my friend, that this objection points just as much against the whole natural government of the world; in which it is obviously appointed, that the innocent should suffer for the sins of the guilty, as in the instance of transmitted diseases, &c. Nay, if there were any force at all in the remark, it would be stronger in one respect against natural Providence, than against Christianity: because under the former we are in many cases commanded, and even necessitated whether we will or not, to suffer for the faults of others; whereas the sufferings of Christ were voluntary. Men by their follies frequently run themselves into difficulties, which would be absolutely fatal to them, were it not for the assistance of others: and this assistance God, by the law of nature, enjoins us to afford—often, with great labour and sufferings to ourselves. So that such objections to the satisfaction of Christ arise, either from a total disregard of God's settled and uniform appointments, or an entire forgetfulness that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every day's experience.

That mankind are at present in a state of degradation, different from that in which they were originally created, is the very ground of the Christian Revelation as contained in the Scriptures. Whether we acquiesce in the account that our being placed in such a state is owing to the crime of our first parents, or choose to

ascribe it to any other cause, it makes no difference in our condition: the vice and unhappiness of the world are still there, notwithstanding all our suppositions; nor is it Christianity, that hath put us into this state. We learn also from the same Scriptures, what experience and the use of expiatory sacrifices from the most early times might have taught us, that repentance alone is not sufficient to prevent the fatal consequences of past transgressions: but that still there is room for mercy, and that repentance shall be available, though not of itself, yet through the mediation of a Divine Person (the Messiah) who from the sublimest principles of compassion died, *the just for the unjust*,* that we might have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.† In what way, indeed, the Death of Christ procured this reconciliation of sinners, the Scriptures have not explained. But it is enough, that the doctrine is distinctly revealed; that it is not contrary to any truths, which reason and experience teach us; and that it accords in perfect harmony with the usual method of the divine conduct in the government of the world.

P. I must confess this method of redemption has a strong apparent tendency to vindicate the authority of God's laws, as well as to deter men from sin: and this, surely, ought to weigh as an argument with those, who are disposed to extol human reason.

M. Yes; and it is an argument, which I have never heard refuted.—But, after all, the credibility of these doctrines is not to be tried at the bar of human reason; and I trust I have satisfied you of the absurdity of disbelieving them, merely because we do not see their necessity or expediency. For though it is highly right, and the most pious exercise of our understanding, to inquire with due reverence into the ends and objects of God's Dispensations; yet, when these elude our research, to argue from our ignorance that such dispensations cannot be from God, is infinitely absurd. The presumption of such a conclusion, indeed, seems almost lost in the folly of it. And the folly of it is yet greater, when it is urged (as it usually is) against things in Christianity similar to these natural dispensations of

* 1 Pet. iii. 18.

† Col. i. 14.

Providence, which are matter of experience. Let reason be kept to : and if any part of the Scripture-account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really *contrary* to reason, let the Scripture be given up : but let not such poor creatures as we are, object against an infinite plan, that we do not perceive the necessity or expediency of all it's parts, and call this 'reasoning'—particularly, when they are parts, in which we are not actively concerned. For not only the reason of the thing, but the whole analogy of Nature, should teach us not to expect to have the like information concerning the Divine conduct, as concerning our own duty. God instructs us by experience, not reason, what good or bad consequences will follow from our acting in such or such a manner; and thus directs us, how we are to behave ourselves in the ordinary concerns of life: yet these are but an almost infinitely small part of natural Providence. The case is the same with regard to Revelation. The doctrine of a Mediator between God and man, against which it is objected, that 'the expediency of some of it's parts is not understood,' relates only to what was done by God in the appointment and by the Mediator in the execution of it. What is required of us, in consequence of this gracious Dispensation, is another subject, in which none can complain for want of information. The constitution of the world, and God's natural government over it, is all mystery, as much as Christianity itself. Yet, under the first, he has given men *all things pertaining to life*; and *all things pertaining unto godliness*,* under the latter.

Placed therefore, as man is, with such prospects of futurity, and such responsibility, in such a state of trial, difficulties, and danger, and provided with such means of deliverance, he can have no doubt about his duty.

P. Indeed, Sir, you have given me full satisfaction upon a most important subject, for which I cannot sufficiently thank you,

* 2 Pet. i. 3.

DIALOGUE III.

Minister. Well, neighbour, I suppose by this time you are become a champion for the faith of the Gospel.

Parishioner. Ah! Sir, you are disposed to be pleasant. The information, which you have so kindly given me, has indeed made a strong impression upon my mind: but, alas! my difficulties are not yet quite removed. I told you, I should try your patience.

M. No, no: besides, I recollect two objections made by you in our last conversation, which we have not yet discussed; I mean, the circumstance of the Revelation of Christianity not having been made universal, and the imperfect evidence afforded us of the truth of that Revelation, compared with what God might have afforded had he thought proper.

P. These are the very things, to which I alluded. They are, indeed, the only subjects of doubt, I think, which remain: but they are, certainly, very serious ones.

M. So they may appear to you: yet, in reality, they amount to no more than this—viz. that it is incredible God should have bestowed any favour at all upon us, unless in the degree in which we think he might (and, for our particular advantage, should) have done; and, also, that it cannot be supposed he would bestow a favour upon any, unless he bestowed the same upon all.

P. But you proposed, when we first entered upon this subject, to show me that (in general) the difficulties, of which I complained, were equally apparent in God's natural government of the world. Now, does this hold in the present instance?

M. It certainly does: for, in the course of that government, we see the Almighty bestowing his gifts with the most promiscuous variety; such as health and strength, capacities of knowledge, means of improvement, riches, and all external advantages. And, as there are not any two men formed exactly alike in shape and features, so there are probably not any two of an exactly like situation, temper, and constitution with regard to the goods and evils of life.

P. But, in so important a matter as religious instruction, is there not some injustice shown to those, who are suffered to labour under any disadvantages?

M. God forbid! *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?** We confess this in words: let us never forget it in fact, or try to explain it away. Had the Christian Revelation even been universal at first, yet from the diversity of men's abilities both of mind and body, their various opportunities, &c. some persons must soon have been in a situation, with respect to religious knowledge, much superior to that of others, as much perhaps as they are at present: just as, if ever the levelling principle of an Agrarian law should (fatally for any country) be adopted, the properties which had been correctly equalised in the beginning of the week, would by the operation of indolence, intemperance, incapacity, and a thousand other causes, have become widely unequal before the end of it. Neither would there have been the same room for the exercise of that peculiar duty, the diffusing of religious knowledge in unenlightened districts, which now (as in the case of the relative duties practised by the rich toward the poor) so honourably, and so advantageously, distinguishes a large portion of the Christian community. Besides, we may rest assured that every merciful allowance will be made, and no more required of any one, than what might be equitably expected from him under the circumstances in which he has been placed; or (to use Scripture-language) that every man *will be accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not.*†

P. Admitting, however, the Divine wisdom and goodness as to the manner and measure of the Gospel-revelation, still I cannot get over my misgivings as to the credibility of it's Evidences. Those evidences, I allow, are very weighty; and the oftener I consider them, the more they appear to be so: but then the objects, to which they apply, are remote; and, at the best, they amount only to strong probabilities. How different is this from the certainties upon which we are enabled to act in the concerns of the present life!

M. I should be surprised at your misapprehension on

* Gen. xviii. 25. † 2 Cor. viii. 12.

this subject, did I not perceive the same also in many other persons, whose minds are otherwise well disposed. To detect the fallacy—for I can call it nothing better—you must allow me to be somewhat copious, where perhaps on a superficial view a few words might seem to suffice.

P. It is too interesting a topic, not to make me all attention.

M. I begin, then, with denying those certainties in life, which you so readily take for granted. We see the ebb and flow of the Tide to-day. This affords a presumption, though the lowest imaginable, that it may happen again to-morrow. But the observation of such an event for so many days and months and ages together, as it has been observed by mankind, gives us a full assurance that it will. So it is, with respect to the common incidents of life. It is not certainty, but probability in a higher or lower degree, which forms the measure of our hopes and fears concerning the success of our pursuits in general. Now you have admitted that there is a probability, and a strong one too, in favour of Religion: and, if so, we are bound in reason to act upon it.

P. Perhaps I expressed myself too forcibly: for in the case you put, and others which occur in life, the probability certainly rises higher than any, upon which we can be supposed to form our religious principles.

M. It may do so, in a few instances; but in general we act upon very slight evidence indeed, in what relates to our temporal interests. It is not only extremely difficult, but in many cases absolutely impossible, for us to balance pleasure and pain, satisfaction and uneasiness, so as to be able to pronounce on which side the overplus is. There are the like difficulties and impossibilities in making the due allowance for a change of temper and taste, for satiety, disgusts, ill health, &c. any of which render men incapable of enjoying, after they have obtained, what they most eagerly desired. Numberless too are the accidents, beside that one of untimely death, which may probably disappoint the best-concerted schemes; and unanswerable objections may be seen to lie against them, which seem however to be overbalanced by reasons on the other side. In such cases, the positive difficulties and dangers of a pursuit are by every one deemed justly disregarded, on account of the

apparently greater advantages to accrue in the event of success, though of that success there be but little probability. We are liable, also, to be deceived by false appearances; and this danger must be greater, if there be a strong bias within (suppose, from indulged passion) to favour the deceit. Yet men do not therefore throw away life, or disregard it's interests. On the contrary, they often engage in pursuits, where the probability is greatly against them: and this conduct is deemed so rational, that in numberless instances a man would be thought in a literal sense distracted, who would not act—and with great application, too—not only upon what is called an 'even chance,' but upon much less, and where even the very lowest degree of presumption existed. Now apply this to the evidences of Christianity, and our obligations to act upon them.

P. The inference is, I own, irresistible. I find I was too hasty in forming my estimate of the evidence, which influences human concerns.

M. Consider, also, that the wisdom or folly of a man's conduct in life, in being influenced by probabilities or the contrary, is generally measured by the importance of the good to be obtained or the evil to be avoided. Thus he, who would be ridiculed for his credulity in acting upon a vague rumour, or on the information of a person of doubtful veracity, in order merely to avoid some trivial inconvenience or obtain some petty advantage; would be blamed for disregarding such rumour or information, where the exercise of a small degree of caution or activity in consequence of it might save the life of his child, or secure to him the possession of a valuable inheritance.

P. Certainly.

M. How much more, then, is it our wisdom and our duty, in a concern of such infinitely superior consequence as our eternal welfare, to examine diligently the multiplied evidences in favour of Christianity; and, if these be found probable, to be guided by the light of it's doctrines!

P. Undoubtedly.

M. But here I shall not rest the matter: for I contend farther, that were the evidences of Christianity much weaker than they really are—nay, were they reduced to the very lowest degree of probability imaginable—it would be equally our duty to search into, and be influenced by them,

P. This is, indeed, going very far : and yet, considering the amazing importance of the Christian Doctrines, and the danger of our inattention where our all and for ever is at stake, I cannot help agreeing with you.

M. Yes, my friend : the very supposition that these Doctrines may be true ought, in all reason, to furnish matter of exercise for religious suspense and deliberation, for moral resolution and self-government ; because such supposition does as really lay men under obligations, as a full conviction of their truth. It gives occasion and motives to consider farther the mighty subject, to preserve attentively upon their minds a general implicit sense that they may be under divine moral government, an awful solicitude about Religion, whether Natural or Revealed. It ought, indeed, to turn men's eyes to every degree of new light, from whatever side it comes. But especially are they bound to keep at the greatest distance from all dissolute profaneness, and to treat with deep reverence a matter in which their whole interest and being and the fate of nature depends ; and this—even admitting the Evidences of Christianity to be as slight as we can possibly conceive. And if this duty be incumbent on all, it must be particularly so on those, who have a character of understanding or a situation of influence in the world, and consequently have it in their power to do infinite harm or good by setting an example of profaneness and avowed disregard to Religion, or the contrary.

P. In this point of view it seems probable, that one end of our not being favoured with still clearer evidences of Christianity may be to try mankind, in the religious sense, by giving scope for a virtuous exercise or vicious neglect of their understandings in investigating those evidences, such as they are.

M. So it appears : and I think we may assuredly conclude that the same inward principle which, after a man is convinced of the truth of Christianity, renders him obedient to it's precepts, would (were he not thus convinced) infallibly set him about examining into the reality of Religion, upon it's system and evidence being offered to his thoughts ; and that, in the latter case, his examination would be made with an impartiality, seriousness, and solicitude proportioned to what his obedience would be in the former.

The difficulties, indeed, in which this evidence is (as some

apprehend) involved, is no more a just ground of complaint, than the external circumstances of temptation or difficulties of practice, which beset men in common life. These give occasion for a more attentive and improving exercise of the virtuous principle; and speculative perplexities act in the very same way. For the evidence of Religion not appearing obvious is, to some persons, a temptation to reject it without any consideration at all; and therefore requires such an exercise of the virtuous principle, as without such a temptation would have been wholly unnecessary. After it has been in some sort considered, likewise, the same obscurity affords opportunity to an unfair mind of explaining away and deceitfully hiding from itself that proof which it otherwise might perceive; and also for men's encouraging themselves in vice from hopes of impunity, though they clearly see thus much at least, that such hopes are uncertain; just as the common temptation to crimes and follies, which end in temporal infamy and ruin, is the hope of not being detected; *i. e.* the doubtfulness of the proof beforehand, that this criminal or foolish behaviour will have such an infamous or ruinous issue. Whereas the correct operation of this supposed doubtfulness would be, to call for a more careful exercise of the virtuous principle, in fairly yielding to the proper influence of any real evidence, though not conclusive; and in practising conscientiously all virtue, though under some uncertainty whether the government of the universe may not possibly be such as that vice shall escape with impunity. And, in general, temptation of every kind and degree, as it calls forth some moral efforts which would otherwise have been wanting, cannot but be an additional discipline and improvement of virtue, as well as probation of it in the other senses of that word. So that the very same account is to be given, why the evidence of Religion should be left in such a manner as to require in some a solicitous (and, perhaps, painful) exercise of their understandings about it; as why others should, after a full conviction of it's truth, be placed in such circumstances as that the practice of it's ordinary duties should require pains and solicitude: why it's apparent doubtfulness should afford matter of temptation to some, as why external difficulties and allurements should be permitted to afford matter of temptation to others.

P. I used to look upon the evidences of Christianity, as totally out of the reach of common understandings : but it now appears to me quite otherwise, if men would only be impartial in considering them.

M. Yes : Surely even common men, were they but as much in earnest about Religion as about their worldly concerns, are fully capable of being convinced that there is a God who governs the world : there is also, undoubtedly, evidence sufficiently level to their comprehensions, of Miracles and of many apparent completions of Prophecy proving the truth of Christianity. This proof, indeed (as I have already admitted) is liable to objections, and may be refined into difficulties. Yet persons, who are capable of seeing these difficulties, are likewise capable of seeing through them ; *i. e.* not of clearing them up, in a way to satisfy their curiosity (for such knowledge is unattainable, with respect to any one thing in nature) but capable of seeing that the proof is not lost in them, or destroyed by the objections upon which they are founded.

P. I remember to have heard the evidences of Religion cavilled at upon this ground, viz. that if a Prince or a Master were to send directions to a servant, he would take care that they should always bear the certain indications whence they came ; and that their sense should be so plain, as to leave no possible doubt (if he could help it) concerning their authority, or their meaning. I see, in part, the fallacy of this : but you can, perhaps, expose it to me, Sir, still more fully.

M. The proper answer to it seems to be, that we cannot argue from the imperfection of human precedents with respect to Him, who is the Governor of the World ; and that he does not, in fact (as we have seen) afford us such perfect information in our temporal affairs. But another and a very sufficient reply is suggested by the consideration, that Religion has peculiar regard to the motive, or principle, upon which the Divine will is complied with : whereas, in the case referred to, the Prince or the Master, in ordering a thing to be done, is not so much guided by that circumstance as by his desire to have it done. Hence, he gives his directions plainly. Were he only disposed to exercise the loyalty or the understanding of his servant, he would probably choose to render those directions more intricate or more obscure.

P. I assure you, Sir, that all my doubts are completely removed ; and I hope ever to be grateful to you, more particularly for the very clear light in which you have placed the credibility of the Evidences of Christianity.

M. I am rejoiced to hear you say so ; especially with respect to the last topic, which beyond all others appears to me to involve objections, slight indeed in themselves, but yet peculiarly harassing to the human mind. To guard you still farther against them, allow me, before we separate, to repeat that—far from it's being the method of Providence in other cases to supply such overhearing evidence, as some require in proof of Christianity, the evidence upon which we are generally appointed to act in ordinary matters is perpetually doubtful in a very high degree ; that the information, which we need in these cases, is by no means given as of course, without any care or pains of our own ; and that, in judging of that information, we are liable to self-deceit from secret prejudices, and also to the deceptions of others. Yet this does not excuse our incredulity, or neglect, in any thing which concerns our worldly interests : much less will similar difficulties justify our inattention, or unbelief, in respect of things which are propounded to us for our eternal welfare. Besides, the alleged doubtfulness of the Evidences of Christianity may be men's own fault ; or, if not, it may in part be accounted for in the same manner as trials and temptations with regard to practice. However, doubting in any sense implies a degree of evidence for that, of which we doubt ; and this degree of evidence as really lays us under obligations, as demonstrative proof.

If then there are persons in the world, who never set themselves in earnest to be informed in Religion, or who secretly wish it may not prove true ; and who therefore are less attentive to evidence than to difficulties, and more to objections than to what can be said in answer to them—we need not wonder, that such persons should fail to discover the evidences of Religion, even though it were most certainly true, and capable of being ever so fully proved.

THE
INTERNAL EVIDENCE
OF
Christianity;

ABRIDGED FROM

DR. PALEY AND MR. SOAME JENYNS.

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

“ Whence hath this man this wisdom ?”

(*Matt. xiii. 54.*)

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ADVERTISEMENT.



The subjoined Tract is founded principally upon Dr. Paley's chapter entitled, 'The Morality of the Gospel,' and Mr. Soame Jenyns' 'View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion.' How little the writings of Dr. Paley are susceptible either of abridgement, extension, or supplement, those who have read them—and who has not read them, with delight and with conviction?—well know. His commendation of Jenyns† will, in the eye of most men, give to that Author abundant sanction; and, with it's limiting clauses, very justly so. Even Dr. Maclaine (late Minister of the English Church at the Hague, and Translator and Annotator of Mosheim's 'Ecclesiastical History') in his Series of Letters addressed to Mr. J., not only gives him credit for being in earnest, but also commends his definitions, or rather descriptions, of the virtues that correspond with the great object and end of the Christian Religion, as judicious and sentimental: "They will force the assent of a good understanding; but their truth and excellence will be best comprehended by the feelings of a good heart."*

It ought here to be stated, however, that Dr. M. represents the general reasoning of Mr. J.'s work, as "neither close nor accurate;" asserts, that "the illustrations run wide of the principles, which they are designed to explain and enforce;" and pronounces it almost universally defective in "luminous order and philosophical precision." Under the strong and just reprehension of so high an authority, I have chiefly confined my abstracts to what regards the Morality of the Gospel.

Dr. M. says; "what I call, and what are usually called, the 'Internal characters' of Christianity, that display it's excellence, and (in conjunction with Miracles) show it's divinity, are—The rational and sublime representations it gives of the Attributes in general, and particularly of the Goodness and Mercy of the Supreme Being;

* See his *Evidences of Christianity*, II. 2.

† "I would willingly, if the limits and nature of my work admitted of it, transcribe into this chapter the whole of what he has said upon the *Morality of the Gospel*; because it perfectly agrees with my own opinion, and because it is impossible to say the same thing so well. This acute observer of human nature, and as I believe sincere convert to Christianity, &c. &c."

the suitableness of it's Declarations of grace, succour, and immortality to the guilt, infirmity, and boundless desires of the human mind; the purity and grandeur of it's Moral precepts, which are adapted to ennobel and improve human nature, and to lead it to true perfection and felicity; and the motives, that it exhibits to enforce the practice of universal virtue." But a system (as he elsewhere remarks) may be characterised by 'greatness, simplicity, utility, and importance;' may be 'honourable to the perfections of God, for any thing we know to the contrary;' and by it's happy influence in inspiring hope, consolation, and humility, may 'tend to the real improvement of human nature:' and still, unaccompanied with visible and extraordinary interpositions, may appear to many as not beyond the dictates of man's wisdom.' To give to such a system the indubitable characters of a Divine Revelation, it is necessary to compare with those internal characters, of excellence and sublimity, the rank and capacity of the persons by whom it was promulgated. This totally changes the nature of the argument. Here the demonstration is complete.

I had intended to avail myself of the late respectable Mr. Andrew Fuller's 'Gospel it's own Witness,' a work exhibiting the Purity and Harmony of the Christian Religion (contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism), as it reveals a God glorious in holiness, teaches us to devote ourselves to his service, supplies an enlarged and immaculate system of morality, furnishes the strongest motives to practise it, and indeed has both powerfully influenced the lives of individuals, and given a tone likewise to the morals of society, thus contributing to render both individuals and society happy: and farther, as it is strictly consistent with historic fact (evinced by the fulfilment of prophecy); as it agrees with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and the result of the closest observation; as it's spirit and stile prove it to harmonise with it's own professions; and as it's doctrines of mediation and redemption are consistent with sober reason, and with the modern opinion of the magnitude of Creation—in all which respects, Deism is lamentably deficient. But such an addition would have swelled my Tract beyond it's projected size: and many, perhaps, may think that, in conjunction with Paley and Jenyns, such an ally (however respectable) would have been superfluous.

June 16, 1820.

F. W.

THE
INTERNAL EVIDENCE
OF
CHRISTIANITY, &c.

THE Morality of the Gospel, *considering from whom it came*, must be admitted by all to be such as, without allowing reality to the pretensions of that Gospel, it is extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to account for. No one, who has given it under this reference an impartial examination, will affect to regard it as the fruit of a religion founded in folly, contrived by craft, or propagated through enthusiasm. The apparent son of a Jewish carpenter expires upon a cross. His followers, chiefly a few fishermen, remarkable for little (while he was with them upon earth) except striking ignorance, particularly in respect to his doctrine and intentions, record and publish the sublime truths committed to their charge with the most unexampled plainness and perseverance, and with the most extraordinary success! It is in this circumstance, that the proof of a supernatural dispensation, as inferable from what is called the 'Internal Evidence' of the Gospel, consists. For this involves Divine Inspiration: Divine Inspiration is a Miracle; and a Miracle is legitimate evidence, that the Doctrine which it accompanies is from God.

LET us consider, then,

I. THE things taught;

II. THE manner of teaching.

I. THE former head, likewise, we may subdivide into two branches: as it comprehends, *negatively*, the omission of those qualities—for instance, Active Courage, Patriotism, and Friendship—which have usually engaged the admiration of mankind, and in their purer acceptation deserve to do so; but which, as they are commonly understood, have in their general effects been prejudicial to human happiness: while it *positively* urges upon us Poverty of Spirit, Forgiveness of Injuries, and Universal Charity; together with Repentance, Faith, Self-abasement, and a Detaching of ourselves from the world.

THE First argument, drawn from the distinctive Morality of the New Testament, is THE PREFERENCE OF THE PATIENT TO WHAT IS USUALLY TERMED THE HEROIC CHARACTER.

THERE is a description of mankind—meek, yielding, and forgiving; not prompt to act, but patient to suffer; silent and gentle under rudeness and insult, suing for reconciliation when others would demand satisfaction, giving way to the pushes of impudence, and indulgent to the prejudices and intractability of those by whom they are surrounded. With the Founder of Christianity this description is the subject of his commendation, his precepts, and his example. *Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.—Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.** This shows, that no two things can be more different than the Patient and the Heroic character. Without objecting to the praises and honours bestowed upon the valiant (the least tribute, which can be paid by such as enjoy safety and affluence through the intervention of their dangers and sufferings) it may truly be asserted, that mere Active Courage can never be a Christian virtue, because Christianity has nothing to do with it. Passive Courage is, indeed, frequently inculcated by this meek and suffering religion, under the titles of ‘Patience’ and ‘Resignation.’ And this is a real and substantial virtue, arising from the noblest dispositions of the human mind; from a contempt of misfortunes, pain, and death, and a confidence in the protection of the Almighty: whereas Active Courage too often springs from the meanest; from passion, or vanity, or self-dependence. Passive Courage is generated by a zeal for truth, and perseverance in duty: Active is the child too generally of pride and revenge, and the parent of cruelty and injustice. In short, Passive Courage is the resolution of a philosopher, Active the ferocity of a savage.

THE state of the reasoning is as follows:—If this Christian character were universal, the world would be a society of friends and brothers; whereas it’s opposite, prevailing to the same extent, would produce a scene of universal contention. A generation of such men, indeed,

* Matt. v. 39—42, 44.

could not subsist. If, as is the fact, this Christian character be partial, and a few only be actuated by it amongst a multitude who are not—still, in whatever degree it prevails, it prevents or allays or terminates quarrels, those great disturbers of human happiness and sources of human misery. Hence we find our Blessed Lord often correcting the ambition of his disciples; admonishing them, that their greatness was to consist in humility, and censuring that love of distinction and greediness of superiority, which the chief persons among his countrymen were so apt to display.*

A Second argument, drawn from the distinctive Morality of the New Testament, is THE STRESS LAID BY OUR SAVIOUR UPON THE REGULATION OF THE THOUGHTS. The former related to the malicious passions: this refers to the voluptuous. Together, they comprehend the whole character. *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things, which defile a man.*† Mark, more particularly, that strong expression; *Whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*‡

THERE can be no doubt with any reflecting mind, but that the propensities of our nature must be subject to regulation: the question is, where the check ought to be placed; upon the thought, or only upon action. Christ, we see, peremptorily decides in favour of the former. Internal purity, with him, is every thing. And assuredly a moral system, which prohibits action, but leaves the thoughts at liberty, will be ineffectual. Let us appeal to the judgement of persons, who appear to have given great attention to the subject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, speaking of the very text last quoted, and understanding it (as we do) to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont so say, that “Our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates.” Haller, who in his ‘Letters to his Daughter’ has recorded this anecdote, adds to it the following remarks of his own:—“It did not escape the observation of Christ, that the rejection of evil thoughts was the best defence against vice. For when a debauched person fills his imagination with impure pictures, the li-

* Matt. xxiii. 6—12. Matt. xii. 39. Luke xi. 43. xiv. 7—11. xx. 46.

† Matt. xv. 19, 20. See, also, xxiii. 25, 27. ‡ Matt. v. 28.

day, as individuals, revenging the smallest affronts by premeditated murder, on principles of honour; and, in their national capacities, destroying each other with fire and sword for considerations of commercial interests, the balance of rival powers, the ambition of princes, or the *madness of the people*? Do we not behold them with their last breath animating their followers to a savage vengeance, and in the agonies of death plunging their daggers into the hearts of their opponents? And, what is still worse, do we not hear all these barbarities celebrated by historians, flattered by poets, applauded in theatres, approved in senates, and even sanctified in pulpits? The important precept of FORGIVENESS OF SPIRIT, the only disposition which can enable man to enjoy quiet here and happiness hereafter, was unknown, until it was promulgated by Him who said; *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.**

ANOTHER precept, equally new and no less excellent, is FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy:" But I say unto you, "Love your enemies, &c."** Among the Heathens, the desire of revenge was represented, even by their wisest teachers, as the mark of a noble mind; and it's accomplishment was deemed one of the chief felicities attendant on a fortunate man. Yet how much more magnanimous, and beneficial to mankind, is Forgiveness—more magnanimous, as it demands the exertion of every generous and exalted disposition, to enable us patiently to bear the wrongs of wickedness and folly as a part of the sufferings incident to a state of probation, and to regard their perpetrators with pity rather than indignation: and more beneficial to mankind, because such amiable conduct alone can put an end to an eternal succession of injuries and retaliations, and by conquering the most inveterate hearts leave us at last no enemies to forgive! This noble virtue however, prior to the introduction of Christianity, was decried in principle as mean and ignominious, and in practice was no where to be discovered.

A third precept, first enjoined by the Gospel, is UNIVERSAL CHARITY. *Charity, saith St. Paul, suffereth long and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth*

* Mark x. 14, 15.

*not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.** This amiable disposition is made the great characteristic of a Christian. Without the humility, patience, meekness, and benevolence, indeed, here ascribed to it, we must live in perpetual discord. And yet for the impressing of this we are indebted to the Gospel: *A new commandment, said our blessed Saviour, I give unto you, That ye love one another. By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples†*—a commandment so sublime, so rational, and so beneficial, so wisely calculated to correct the depravity and abate the miseries of human nature, that did we universally comply with it, we should be effectually relieved from all the inquietudes arising either from our own unruly passions or from those of others. It would likewise, by the habits it must superinduce, so prepare our minds for the kingdom of heaven, that we should slide out of a life of peace and love into that celestial society by an almost imperceptible transition. Whereas the proud, the covetous, the ambitious, and the vindictive would find in those happy regions no room for the pursuit of their darling objects; and must, therefore, be eternally excluded from them, not only as a punishment, but also on account of their incapacity.

HENCE REPENTANCE is strenuously, and for the first time, insisted on by this religion, as being alone able in it's proper acceptation (viz. a change of the nature of the offender, which in the language of Scripture is called, *being born again‡*) to purge us from our transgressions. Mere contrition for past crimes, it must be obvious, can no more cleanse a mind corrupted by long continuance in vicious habits, than it can restore health to the body distempered by a protracted course of vice and intemperance.

FAITH, for which the philosophers of antiquity had not even a correspondent term, is another moral duty taught by Christianity. This, in general, signifies a humble trust in God, and an unshaken confidence in his promises; and, as applied particularly to the Gospel, a full belief that Christ was the Son of God, the Messiah foretold by the Prophets—commissioned by his Father to preach righteousness, and judgement, and everlasting life, and destined to die as an atonement for the sins of mankind. And in this the will is, to a certain degree, concerned. *With the heart man believeth*

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7. † John xiii. 34, 35. ‡ John iii. 3.

unto righteousness.* Daily experience, indeed, shows us that men not only pretend to believe, but actually do believe, almost any propositions which suit their interests or inclinations, and unfeignedly change their sincere opinions with their situations and circumstances. For we have power over the eye of the mind, as well as that of the body, to close it against the strongest rays of truth, whenever they become painful to us; and to open it again to the faint glimmerings of scepticism or infidelity, when we *love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.*† Thus, we see, Faith is not quite involuntary, or simply dependent on the degree of evidence offered to our understandings.

SELF-ABASEMENT, also, is exclusively inculcated by the Gospel. This requires us to impute even our own virtues to the grace and favour of our Creator, and to acknowledge that we can do nothing through our own powers, unless assisted by his over-ruling influence. *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.*‡ A doctrine productive of so much humility, resignation, and dependence upon the Almighty, was of course not less repugnant to the pride of ancient Philosophy, than it is to that of modern Deism.

LASTLY, a DETACHING OF OURSELVES FROM THE WORLD is a moral virtue taught by the New Testament, and by the New Testament alone. By a 'detaching of ourselves from the world,' however, is not to be understood seclusion from society, relinquishing of business, or retirement to a cloister. Industry and cheerfulness are frequently recommended in that Divine Volume; nor is the acquisition of wealth and honour prohibited, if they can be obtained with perfect honesty, and by a moderate degree of exertion. It is the unremitted anxiety, the application engrossing our whole time and thoughts, which are forbidden; because they are utterly incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel. If we toil on from day to day, and from year to year, in the vain pursuits and frivolous occupations of the world, and at last die in our harness—how can we expect, even should no gigantic crime stand in the way, to step immediately, with nothing but the gross feelings of earth about us, into the kingdom of heaven?

THE favourite characters among the Pagans were the turbulent, the ambitious, and the intrepid, who through

* Rom. x. 10.

† John iii. 19.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

labours and dangers acquired wealth, and lavished it in luxury and corruption. Christianity, on the contrary, forbids all extraordinary efforts to earn, and care to secure, and anxiety to enjoy it. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.* Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? †*

AGAIN; the chief object of the Pagans was, immortal fame. For this their poets sang, their heroes fought, and their patriots died: and this was hung out by their philosophers and legislators, as the great incitement to noble deeds. What declares the Christian Legislator to his disciples upon this subject? *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

THUS, we perceive, the contrast between the Christian and all other institutions (religious or moral) prior to it's appearance, is abundantly evident; and the infinite superiority of the former is as little to be disputed—unless any one shall undertake to prove that Humility, Patience, Forgiveness, and Benevolence are less amiable and less beneficial qualities than Pride, Turbulence, Revenge, and Malignity; that the contempt or the charitable distribution of riches is less honourable than the acquisition of them by fraud or violence, or the employing of them for purposes of avarice or profusion; or, lastly, that a real immortality in the kingdom of heaven is an object less exalted, and less rational, than an imaginary immortality in the applause of our mis-judging and perishable fellow-creatures.

SUCH a system of religion and morality, assuredly, could not have been the work of those ignorant persons, by whom it was actually published. It must, therefore, have been effected by the supernatural interposition of Divine Wisdom and Power—in other words, it must derive it's origin from God.

THIS argument is founded on the very same reasoning, by which the material world is proved to be the work of his invisible hand. Whether we consider the minute bodies of animals, too small for perception, or the planetary orbs, too vast for imagination, we are certain that (as they cannot be the work of man) they must have proceeded from an omnipotent Creator. When we find a system of religion and

* Matt. vi. 19.

† Ib. 31.

morality infinitely superior to all ideas, which could naturally have occurred to the minds of its preachers, we as necessarily form the same conclusion.

II. NEXT to what our Saviour taught, may be considered the peculiar manner of his teaching. His precepts, unaccompanied by arguments or limitations, were conceived in short emphatic sentences, in occasional reflexions, or in round maxims. This was exactly suitable to the character which he assumed, and the situation in which as a teacher he was placed. Professing to be a messenger from God, he put the truth of what he taught upon authority. *I say unto you, Swear not at all, &c.** With this view, the purpose to be consulted by him was, *impression*; a purpose, which nothing would be so likely to effect, as strong ponderous maxims frequently urged upon his hearers: *As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.†* *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.—And, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.‡* From the shortness likewise of our Lord's ministry, the numerous places and audiences which claimed his attention, and the persecutions or popularity which occasionally abridged his visits, nothing appears to have been so practicable, or likely to be so efficacious, as leaving, wherever he came, concise lessons of duty. To this mode of moral instruction it is incidental, that the rules will be conceived in absolute terms, leaving the needful applications and distinctions to those, to whom they were delivered. They would naturally, also, be delivered in forcible expressions, as having to encounter general propensities. Many of them, likewise, (*Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also, &c.§*) though they appear in the form of specific precepts, are intended as descriptive of disposition and character. He, who should content himself with waiting for the precise occasion, and literally observing the rule when that occasion offered, would do nothing, or worse than nothing: but he who considers the character and disposition inculcated, and makes it a model for his own, takes perhaps the best possible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the evils, of his temper.

OF the Parables too, of the New Testament many would have done honour to any book in the world; from

* Matt. v. 34. See, also, 39, 44, &c. † Luke vi 31.

‡ Matt. xxii. 37, 39. § Matt. v. 39, 41.

the choice of the subjects, the structure of the narratives, the propriety and force of the circumstances woven into them, and, in some (e. g. the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Pharisee and the Publican) from an union of pathos and simplicity, which in the best productions of human genius is the fruit only of a much exercised and well-cultivated judgement.

AND the Lord's Prayer, for a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitableness to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of it's petitions—is without an equal, or a rival.

Now, whence did all these come? Was Jesus Christ, in fact, a well-instructed philosopher, whilst he is represented to us as an illiterate peasant? Or shall we say, that some early converts of taste and education composed these pieces, and ascribed them to their principal? Beside all other incredibilities in this account, it may be answered (as Dr. Jortin has answered) that '*they could not do it.*' No specimens of composition, which the Christians of the first century have left us, authorise us to believe that they were equal to the task. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Christ, were to assist him in the undertaking, may be inferred from their Talmuds and other writings nearest to that age.

If the brevity of this Compendium admitted, we might (with Dr. Paley) consider our Lord's Discourses, also, in their negative character :

As *exhibiting no particular description of the invisible world* ; whereas enthusiasm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the departed, above all other subjects, with a wild particularity. The Koran of Mahomet is half made up of it :

As *injoining no austerities*, with a view of entitling their practisers to a higher degree of divine favour :

As *expressing no impassioned devotion*, no vehement or rapturous ejaculations, no violent urgency of prayer.

As *not encouraging the substitution of forwardness and fervency in his cause for the merit of regular morality* :*

As *not falling in with any of the depraved fashions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education* : but on the contrary, under a religion entirely ceremonial, and amongst a people extremely tenacious of those ceremonies,

* See Matt. vii. 21—23.

instituting a Dispensation with a shorter and simpler ritual than is to be found in any other religion whatever :

As not introducing into his various apophthegms, many of them referring to precepts of the Jewish Law (the subject generally, among his countrymen, of the most puerile and quibbling expositions) a single example either of sophistry or false subtilty, or of any thing approaching thereunto :

As not displaying any portion whatever of the national intolerance, narrow-mindedness, or excluding temper of the Jews. In the parable of the Good Samaritan,* the very point of the story is, that the person relieved was the national and religious enemy of his benefactor :

AND, lastly, as completely abstracted from all views either of ecclesiastical or of civil polity.† With respect, indeed, to discussions concerning different forms of government, Christianity declines every question upon the subject. It is alike applicable, useful, and friendly to them all ;

TENDING to make men virtuous, and it being easier to govern good men than bad men under any constitution ;

STATING obedience to government, in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience ;

INDUCING dispositions favourable to public tranquillity ; and,

PRAYING for communities, and for the governors of communities, of every description, with a fervency proportioned to the influence which they possess upon human happiness.

WHEN, therefore, we consider either what Christ taught or what he did not teach, either the substance or the manner of his discourses ; his preference of solid to popular virtues, of a character which is commonly despised to a character which is universally extolled ; his placing, with respect to our licentious vices, the check in the right place, viz. upon the thoughts ; his collecting of human duty into two well-devised rules, his repetition of these rules, the stress he laid upon them (especially in comparison with positive duties), fixing thereby the sentiments of his followers ; and his exclusion of all regard to reputation in our devotion and our alms, and by parity of reason, in our other virtues : when we consider, that his instructions were delivered in a form calculated for impression, the precise purpose in his situation to be consulted ; and that they were illustrated by

* Luke x. 30—37. See, also, Matt. viii. 11. Luke ix. 55.

† See John xviii. 36. Matt. xxii. 21. Luke xii. 14. John viii. 11.

parables, the choice and structure of which would have been admired in any composition whatever: when we observe him free from the usual symptoms of enthusiasm, a wild particularity in the description of a future state, austerity in his institutions, and heat and vehemence in his devotion; not compromising, in favour of ostensible fervency of profession, the interests of morality; free, also, from the peculiar imperfections and depravities of his age and country; amidst a race of teachers the most frivolous and sophistical, totally free from sophistry and frivolity; and candid and liberal in his judgement of the rest of mankind, though of a nation singularly prone to uncharitableness and self-partiality: (lastly) when we find, in his religion, no scheme of building up a hierarchy, or of ministering to the views of human governments—we cannot but acknowledge the probity of those to whom it owes its origin, and deem some regard due to their testimony, when they affirm that ‘it proceeded from God;’ appealing at the same time, for the truth of their assertion, to miracles which they themselves had wrought, or had witnessed.

THE Character of Christ is a part of the Morality of the Gospel. Upon this it may, first, be observed, that neither as represented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he ever charged with any personal vice. This faultlessness is more peculiar, than we are apt to imagine. Some stain pollutes the morals, or the morality, of almost every other teacher and lawgiver. One loose principle is found in nearly all the Pagan writings, particularly in those of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus; and that is, recommending to their disciples a compliance with the religious rites of the countries, which they visited. Mahomet’s licentious transgression of his own licentious rules, with his asserted permission from heaven of unlimited sensuality, is confessed by every writer of the Moslem story.

SECONDLY, in the histories which are left us of Jesus Christ, although very short and not dealing in panegyric, we perceive traces of an extraordinary spirit of devotion, of the greatest zeal and fortitude, of unparalleled prudence, of singular deadness to the things of the world, of the utmost benignity, and of perfect humility, meekness, and patience. I say, ‘traces’ of these qualities; because the qualities themselves are to be collected from incidents, no formal character of him being drawn in any part of the New Testament.

THUS we see the DEVOUTNESS of his mind in his being engaged among the Doctors in the Temple, at twelve years of age, in *his father's business*, (a) to whom he invariably referred every thing connected with his mission—his doctrine, miracles, &c.; in his frequently retiring to solitary prayer; (b) in his habitual giving of thanks; (c) in his ascribing the beauties and operations of Nature to the bounty of Providence; (d) in his earnest addresses to his Father, more especially that solemn one before the raising of Lazarus from the dead; (e) and in the deep piety of his behaviour in the garden, on the last evening of his life. (f)

HIS ZEAL AND FORTITUDE we discover in his being constantly in action, ever teaching or waiting opportunities to teach (so that it appears to have been, almost without a metaphor, *his meat to do the will of Him that sent him* (g)); and in his undauntedly reproving those rulers, who always had his life in their hands.

WE discern his PRUDENCE in his selecting the most appropriate seasons, stopping at the best points, and pressing his doctrines as the hearers were *able to bear*; (h) but still more particularly, where prudence is most wanted, in his conduct upon trying occasions, and in his answer to artful questions—for instance, in his withdrawing frequently from the first symptoms of tumult, (i) with the express care of carrying on his ministry in quietness; in the difficulty concerning the interfering relations of a future state, (k) and in the case in which he was required to give an explanation of the authority by which he acted (l)—to say nothing of other examples, already adduced.

HIS DEADNESS TO THE THINGS OF THE WORLD is inferable from the account of the Temptation, (m) from his conduct at feasts (which he attended for the purpose of teaching), and from his having wrought no miracle for himself during a life of privacy and poverty, of contradiction and reproach.

WE perceive his BENIGNITY, and affectionateness of temper, in his kindness to children; (n) in the tears which he shed over his falling country, (o) and upon the death of

(a) Luke ii. 49. (b) Matt. xiv. 23.; xxvi. 36, &c. (c) Matt. xi. 25. Mark viii. 6. Luke xxii. 17. John vi. 23. (d) Matt. vi. 26, 28. (e) John xi. 41. (f) Matt. xxvi. 36—46. (g) John iv. 34. (h) Mark iv. 33. (i) Matt. xiv. 22. Luke v. 16. John v. 13.; vi. 15. (k) John viii. 11. (l) Matt. xxi. 23—27. See, also, Matt xxii. 16—21. 23—32. and Luke xii. 14. (m) Matt iv. 1—11. (n) Mark x. 16. (o) Luke xix. 41.

his friend, (a) &c.; in his noticing of the widow's mite, (b) and in various parables, of which none but one of the most compassionate of natures could have been the author.

HIS HUMILITY we trace in his *making himself of no reputation*, (c) in his washing the disciples' feet, (d) and in his constant reprehension of their weak ambition.

LASTLY, His MEEKNESS and PATIENCE appear in his rebuke of their forward zeal at the Samaritan village, (e) in his expostulation with Pilate, (f) and in his prayer for his enemies at the moment of his suffering, (g) which (though it has been, in later times, frequently imitated) was then new.

His lessons likewise touch, and that often by very affecting representations, upon some of the most interesting topics of human duty and of human meditation—upon the principles, by which the decisions of the Last Day will be regulated; (h) upon the supreme importance of religion; (i) upon penitence, (k) self-denial, (l) watchfulness, (m) placability, (n) confidence in God, (o) the value of spiritual (that is, mental) worship, (p) the necessity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the principle of the law, instead of seeking for evasions in a technical construction of it's terms. (q)

We may also add, that the Character of Jesus Christ is infinitely exalted by the union of virtues which it displays, not only in assemblage, but in harmony with each other. Sometimes dignified and authoritative, and sometimes meek and humble, but not admitting in his intrepidity the slightest tincture of fierceness or arrogance, or with his mildness combining any portion of apathy or timidity; uniting compassion to sinners with hatred of sin, exquisite sensibility with an entire command of his feelings, the purest spirituality with the greatest regard to the wants and circumstances of his hearers, an absolute superiority to the world with an universal submission to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of his country—he assuredly *spake as never man spake*, (r) and acted as never man acted.

In short, never was a character (as Archbishop Newcome observes) “at the same time so commanding and natural, so resplendent and pleasing, so amiable and

(a) John xi. 35. (b) Mark xii. 42—44. (c) Phil. ii. 7. (d) John xiii. 5. (e) Luke ix. 55. (f) John xix. 11. (g) Luke xxiii. 34. (h) Matt. xxv. 31—46. (i) Matt. vi. 33. Mark viii. 35. Luke xii. 21—24. (k) Luke xv. (l) Matt. 29, 30. (m) Matt. xxiv. 42; xxv. 13. Mark xiii. 33—37. (n) Matt. xviii. 33. Luke xvii. 4. (o) Matt. vi. 25—30. (p) John iv. 23, 24. (q) Matt. v. 27, &c. (r) John vii. 46.

venerable, as that of Christ. There is a peculiar contrast in it between an awful dignity and majesty, and the most engaging loveliness, tenderness, and softness. He now converses with prophets, lawgivers, and angels; and, the next instant, he meekly endures the dullness of his disciples, and the blasphemies and rage of the multitude. He now calls himself *greater than Solomon*, one who can command *legions of angels*, the giver of life to *whomsoever he will*, the Son of God who *shall sit on his glorious throne to judge the world*; at other times we see him embracing *young children*, not *lifting up his voice in the streets*, not *breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax*, calling his disciples *not servants but friends and brethren*, and comforting them with an exuberant and parental affection. Let us pause an instant, and fill our minds with the idea of One who knew all things heavenly and earthly, searched and laid open the inmost recesses of the heart, rectified every prejudice and removed every mistake of a moral and religious kind; by a word exercised sovereignty over all Nature, penetrated the hidden events of futurity, gave promises of admission into a happy immortality, had the keys of life and death, claimed an union with the Father; and yet was pious, mild, gentle, humble, affable, social, benevolent, friendly, affectionate. Such a character is fairer than the morning-star. Each separate virtue is made stronger by opposition and contrast; and the union of so many virtues forms a brightness which fitly represents the glory of that God who is invisible, who *dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see.*"*

If we extend our argument to other parts of the New Testament, we may offer as among the best rules of life (or, which is the same thing, descriptions of virtue) that have ever been delivered, the following passages:—*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*†—*Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*‡ *For the grace of God that bringeth*

* And yet, by a gross deception, under the mask of the venerable name of Archbishop Newcome have the modern Socinians unblushingly attempted to obtrude their garbled and falsified Gospel upon the world: though it is known to real scholars, that one of the effects of a 'New and Improved Version' of the Holy Volume would be, to furnish several additional and incontrovertible texts in favour of the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

† James i. 27.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 5.

*salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.**

LASTLY, the whole volume is replete with piety, with (what were almost unknown to heathen moralists) *devotional virtues*; the most profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual sense of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in the final result of his councils and dispensations, and a disposition to resort upon all occasions for the supply of human wants, for assistance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of sin to his rich and over-flowing mercy.

AND what shall we say of the propagation of Christianity? It is well known, that in the course of a very few years, this religion was spread over all the principal parts of Asia and of Europe, by the ministry of only a few humble missionaries; that paganism was then in the highest repute, believed by the vulgar and supported by the great, the wisest men of the wisest nations assisting at it's sacrifices and consulting it's oracles; and that, on the preaching of these few humble missionaries, it's altars were deserted, and it's deities became dumb. Now no man can possibly believe, that from an imposture the most wicked and blasphemous (for, if an imposture, such Christianity is) all the religion and virtue, at present existing on earth, derive their origin.

If, however, any man can believe that, when the literature of Greece and Rome—then in their meridian lustre—were insufficient for the task, the son of a carpenter with twelve unlettered associates, *unassisted by any supernatural power*, had been able to invent a system of theology the most sublime and ethics the most perfect, which had escaped the penetration and the learning of Plato and Aristotle and Cicero; and that this system, through their marvellous sagacity, excluded every false virtue, though universally admired, and admitted every true virtue, however despised and ridiculed: if any one can believe, that these men became impostors for no other purpose than the promulgation of truth, villains in order to inculcate honesty, and martyrs without the remotest prospect of earthly honour or advantage; and that, *independently of all heavenly co-operation*, they diffused this their system over the greatest portion of the then known world, in opposition to the

* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

interests, pleasures, prejudices, and ambition of mankind; triumphing over power, intrigue, custom, zeal, influence, rhetoric, and philosophy, all leagued against its reception—If any one can believe these miraculous events, contradictory as they are to constant experience, he must be possessed of much more faith than is necessary to make him a Christian, and remains an infidel from mere credulity.

EVEN should these credulous infidels after all be in the right, yet from believing this asserted revelation what harm can ensue? Would it render princes more tyrannical, or subjects more ungovernable; the rich more insolent, or the poor more disorderly? Would it make worse parents or children, husbands or wives, masters or servants, friends or neighbours? Would it not rather render men more virtuous, and consequently more happy, in every situation? Such belief would not be *criminal*; because it cannot be a crime to assent to evidence which has been able to convince the best and wisest of mankind, and which surely it would be more meritorious to admit from a disposition of charity, than to reject out of obstinacy and self-conceit. Neither could such belief be *detrimental*; because, even if Christianity be a fable, it is a fable, the influence of which is the only principle capable of retaining men in an uniform course of virtue and piety, and of supporting them in the hour of distress, of sickness, and of death.

ALAS! the most insurmountable, as well as the most usual obstacle to our belief, arises from our passions and our appetites: for faith being (as above observed) not less an act of the will, than of the understanding, we oftener disbelieve for want of inclination than want of evidence. That the authority of Revelation should be well founded, is certainly for the interest of good men; and, still more so, for that of the bad, because it is the only system which can give them any assurance of pardon. If any one by profligacy or extravagance contracts a debt, repentance may hinder him from increasing it, but can never pay it off for him. He will still continue to be accountable for it, unless it be discharged by himself, or by some other in his stead. This very discharge Christianity holds forth on our repentance. It is, therefore, well worth every man's while to believe Christianity, if he can; as he will find it the surest preservative against all vicious habits and their attendant evils, under distresses and disappointments the best resource, and at all times the firmest basis on which contemplation, an act so essential to the constitution of the human mind, can repose.

FINALLY: let it be remembered that even in mathe-

matics there are many propositions, which though on a cursory view they appear to the most acute understandings, uninstructed in that science, to be certainly false, are found on a closer scrutiny to be capable of the strictest demonstration; and that therefore it is at least as possible, with respect to the Christian Religion, for them to be mistaken, who have made few and superficial inquiries into the subject, as for those great masters of reason and erudition—Bacon, Newton, Milton, Hale, Locke, and Boyle to have been deceived in their belief: a belief, to which they inflexibly adhered after the most diligent researches into the authenticity of it's records, the completion of it's prophecies, the sublimity of it's doctrines, the purity of it's precepts, and the subtilty and sophistry of it's adversaries; and which they have testified to the world by their writings, without any other motive than their regard for truth and the benefit of mankind.

SHOULD the few foregoing pages be so fortunate, as to persuade any unhappy sceptic to place some confidence in these great opinions, and to distrust his own; to convince him, that Christianity may not be altogether artifice and error; and to prevail upon him to examine, before he rejects it—their purpose will be abundantly answered, and their compiler will have the satisfaction of reflecting that he has not lived in vain.

THE
INWARD WITNESS
TO
Christianity;
ABRIDGED FROM
DR. WATTS'
THREE SERMONS
UPON THAT SUBJECT.

By the Rev. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

“He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.”
(1 John, v. 10.)

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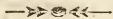
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The following Tract is obviously, from it's very nature, addressed to Believers. But is it too much to entertain a fear that, through the wicked industry with which Deism has recently circulated her obsolete quibbles and her stale jests, doubts may have been occasionally excited in the breasts even of the pious and the good. These doubts, though probably transient in their duration and slight in their effects, it is surely desirable wholly, and for ever, to efface. At all events, we know where it is written: precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; and who can tell whether, under the blessing of the Almighty, this delightful picture of peace and joy, reflected from the bosom of the sincere Christian, may not in a blessed moment woo the eye and win the heart of some unhappy person, whom Infidelity has long kept a stranger to both one and the other!

Dr. Watts, who was born in 1674, underwent in 1712 a violent attack of fever, which so shattered his frame, that he was obliged to intermit his ministerial labours among the Dissenters for four years. In consequence of this, Sir Thomas Abney generously took him to his own home; where, under his care and that of his excellent lady, he was supplied with every comfort. Under that hospitable roof he spent the remaining thirty-six years of his life: and it would be difficult (says Dr. Aikin) to produce an instance of a connexion of friendship between literature and opulence so long, so intimate, so free from any discordant or unpleasing feelings, and in which the relations of patron and dependent were so thoroughly obliterated by the perception of reciprocal benefits. Such, indeed, was the gentleness and candour of Dr. Watts' nature, disarming him of all polemic rigour, that Dr. Johnson himself could not but admire his "meekness of opposition and his mildness of censure."

It has been asserted that, 'toward the close of life, he changed his opinions concerning the Trinity.' But, estimated by his works (from which, as the above respectable Bio-

grapher justly observes, and not from unauthorised reports, a writer's sentiments are to be ascertained), he must certainly rank among the decided advocates of orthodoxy. To whatever class he belongs, he must always be regarded as one of those, whose whole heart was devoted to the promotion of the best interests of mankind, and whose life would have done honour to any system of opinions.

F. W.

April 25, 1820.

THE
INWARD WITNESS
TO
CHRISTIANITY, &c.

THERE are two points of the greatest importance proposed for the investigation of mankind :

1. WHETHER the religion offered to their acceptance be divine ; and,

2. WHETHER they have so far complied with it's rules, as to be entitled to hope for it's blessings.

NURSED up however, as we have been, from our childhood in the forms of Christianity, we too generally take the first of these points for granted : and assuredly, strongly as it demands the attention of all who have leisure for the investigation, the principal concern of the unlearned is with the second.

BUT in the primitive ages of this Dispensation, it was far otherwise. The Gospel, at that time, was imperfectly established : and it's disciples, seeing it opposed by the world at large, might occasionally waver in their belief of it's truth. It was their duty, therefore, carefully to examine, whether it came from God or not. And, with a view to this duty, St. John observes ; *He, that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.* The divinity of the Christian Religion has, indeed, an inward attestation in the heart of every true believer.

THAT men should be Christians merely on the ground, upon which Turks are Mahometans, because they are born so, is a wretched foundation for the hope of heavenly glory. The times are full of peril ; and how will any one be able to stand, who has no firmer a footing ? Infidelity is a growing weed. The neglect, if not contempt, of Revealed Religion is spreading in many parts of the world : and, if he is not furnished with some more satisfactory evidences of it's truth, he may be in danger of surrendering his faith to a quibble or a jest. Nay, suppose he thinks that he has complied with it's rules, and has raised his expectations to a high degree ; if the Tempter in a melancholy hour should assault him with some

such bold questions as these; "How do you know that your Religion is true? What tokens have you to show, that it came from God?" and he has nothing else to allege in reply, but that 'it is the Religion in which he was educated, and which his forefathers have for many centuries professed:' how might the insufficiency of the answer surprise and alarm even his own mind, when he began seriously to reflect upon it! I will briefly, therefore, state a few of the chief external proofs of Christianity, as introductory to that which is referred to by St. John.

MANY are the testimonies of this description, which God has given to the Gospel. If we trace the life of Christ from his manger to his cross, we shall observe the rays of divinity still shining round his doctrine and his works, and proving him to have been commissioned from on high. At his birth, Angels appeared in brightness, and a strange new Star was his witness in heaven. On earth, the Wise Men of the East were his witnesses, when they presented gold, and frankincense, and myrrh* to the God, the King of Israel. Simeon and Anna, in the Temple, witnessed to the holy child Jesus. The Doctors, with whom he disputed when only twelve years old, were witnesses that there was in him something more than man. At his baptism, the Father and the Spirit witnessed that this was He, the Messiah. His whole life was a life of marvels. Every blind eye that he opened saw, and declared, his power. The very dead came from the land of silence, to bear testimony in his favour. The Devils themselves confessed, that he was *the Holy One of God*.† Miracles attended him to the grave: the grave itself was opened for his release by a miracle; and his salvation was afterward published by his followers, *God himself bearing them witness with signs and wonders*.‡

All these, however, were still but outward witnesses. There is one of an inward nature, belonging to every sincere Christian. *He, that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself*. This passage involves a threefold inquiry:

I. WHAT *believing on the Son of God* means;

II. WHAT the *inward witness* is, which Faith gives to Christianity; and,

III. IN what respects it exceeds all other testimonies.

I. *BELIEVING on the Son of God* means, believing Jesus Christ to be the Messiah (or, Saviour of the world) foretold by the prophecies and prefigured by the types of the

* Matt. ii. 11.

† Mark i. 24.

‡ Heb. ii. 4.

Old Testament, and trusting in him in that character. This includes a belief, with respect to his Person, that he is both true God and true man—that eternal *Word*, which *in the beginning was with God and was God*, (a) but in due time *was made flesh and dwelt among us*; (b) and, with regard to his Doctrine, that we are all sinners, and as such condemned by the divine law to eternal death: that, from the strictness of this law, no man with his natural infirmity can fulfil it, nor from the rigour of it, escape it's condemnation: that therefore Christ came down from heaven, not only to perform it's duties by an active obedience, but also to subject himself to it's penalties for our sakes; in order that we, who *were under the law, might be redeemed from it's curse, and might receive a blessing*: (c) that he, accordingly, was delivered *for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*: (d) that but for his purifying influences, we could have no hope of heaven, for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; (e) and that he shall raise the dead, and finally judge and sentence all men according to their works.

But this is not all, that we are required to believe: for this belief, perhaps, Simon Magus the Sorcerer had, though he was *in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*. (f) The faith of the true Christian is more than a bare assent to the great truths of the Gospel: it is such as *overcomes the world*, gains the victory over things sensual and over Satan, and evinces it's possessor to be *born of God*. (g) It, therefore, farther implies a trusting of our souls into the hands of Christ: so that we may be able to affirm with St. Paul; *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*. (h) When the sinner from a dread of eternal death, with a conviction of his inability to effect his escape, applies unto the Saviour; desirous to be sanctified by the grace that is from above, because he perceives the necessity of holiness, and yet feels himself incapable of attaining it by his own exertions: when, in fine, he is satisfied that though he is to *strive to enter in at the strait gate* (i) as earnestly as if his success wholly depended upon his unassisted efforts, he is still to pronounce himself, after a life of incessant piety, an *unprofitable servant, who has only done that which was his duty to do* (k); then is he a true believer (in the correct gospel-sense of the word) *on the Son*

(a) John i. 1. (b) i. 4. (c) Gal. iii. 13, 14. (d) Rom. iv. 25.
 (e) Heb. xii. 14. (f) Acts viii. 23. (g) 1 John iv. 4, 5. (h) 2 Tim.
 i. 12. (i) Luke xiii. 24. (k) Luke xvii. 10.

of God, and has the witness in himself that his religion is divine.

II. BUT what is this inward witness, which Faith gives to Christianity?

ON the original promulgation of the Gospel, many were overpowered with present miracles, convincing them by irresistible evidence that He, who wrought them, was *the Messiah*. Such for instance, among others, was the Conversion of St. Paul. Examples, however, of this description, though wisely adapted to the infancy of the New Religion, are not to be expected in it's maturity.

IN attempting to explain the passage above-quoted from St. John, some persons have bewildered themselves in the land of blind enthusiasm, that region of clouds and darkness which pretends forsooth to divine light! But the Apostle is not speaking of irrational and supernatural impulses. Christianity has a better testimony than these, which belongs to all true believers, and can approve itself to the reason of all. *This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.** Let us examine therefore, what *Eternal Life* is, how far it is actually found in believers, and how it becomes a witness of Christianity in their breasts.

ETERNAL Life consists in Happiness and Holiness, two things so necessarily connected, that they invariably run into one another.

I. HAPPINESS implies—the Pardon of Sin, the special Favour of God, and the Pleasure arising from the regular operation of all our powers and passions.

1. FROM the Pardon of Sin arises peace of Conscience. This is a part of heaven; and in heaven it exists in full perfection. When the sinner may humbly hope that his transgressions are blotted out, † he has then a part of final blessedness, a beginning of eternal life. And this is, in some measure, felt by every true believer. The hope, that the Deity is reconciled to him by the mediation of a Redeemer, belongs exclusively to Christianity, and satisfactorily establishes it's truth. *Therefore, being justified by faith (saith the Apostle) we have peace with God.‡* Other Religions, which have been drawn from the remains of the light of nature, or invented by the fears or folly and propagated by the craft or superstition of mankind, are here all at a loss, and cannot speak solid comfort to the soul.

NEITHER the Priests nor the Philosophers of the

* 1 John v. 11.

† Isaiah xxiii. 25

‡ Rom. v. 1.

Heathen world were able to state, 'Whether God would pardon sin at all, or not.' The Light of Nature would, indeed, exhibit that great Being as essentially gracious and compassionate: but whether or not he would be so to sinners, it could never determine. The Son of God alone, who came down from the bosom of his Father, could inform us how his heart was affected toward us.

AGAIN; the Light of Nature could not apprise us, 'How often God would pardon sinners.' Could we even, by it's faint glimmerings, have discovered that he would forgive offences, we could never have inferred how many times he would forgive them. Who indeed, except a divine messenger, could communicate unto us this?

FARTHER; the Light of Nature would be incapable of ascertaining, 'How great the offences were, that could be pardoned.' It could not assure us, that rebellion of the deepest aggravations should meet with forgiveness upon the gospel-conditions.

ONCE more; Reason and Natural Religion could never teach us, 'Upon what terms God would pardon:' that we must *confess, and forsake, our sins** in order to find mercy; that we must trust in the sufferings, and depend upon the merits, of another; and that *there is none other name under heaven given among men*, except that of Jesus, *whereby we must be saved*.†

FINALLY: Religions invented by man could not show us, 'Upon what grounds we might expect pardon: for they knew nothing of an atonement proportioned to our offences. They taught their votaries indeed, by the stings of an uneasy conscience, that there was an offended Deity; and blood overflowed their altars, wounds self-inflicted scarified their flesh, and wine and oil deluged their temples—but all without reasonable hope. The Jewish Religion, it is true, as framed by God himself, comprehended in it the way of obtaining forgiveness: but it was a way darkened by types and shadows, and could therefore never *make the comers thereunto perfect*.‡ The *blood of bulls and goats*, they must have been convinced, could not effectually cancel transgression; and they discerned but faintly the all-sufficient sacrifice of the Saviour in their daily ritual. Containing only dim and obscure notices of the great Anti-type, though it might cleanse the soul before God, it could not generally disburthen their consciences from the sense of defilement. Of the Socinians then of

* Prov. xxviii. 13.

† Acts iv. 12.

‡ Heb. x. 1.

modern times, who denying the proper satisfaction of Christ have nothing to trust to but the Divine Mercy, how frail must be the reliance! While to a repentant sinner, who fully *believes on the Son of God*, the Gospel offers peace and rest. He trusts to it, with humble confidence, for salvation; for he *has the witness in himself*, that it is divine.

2. THE happiness of Eternal Life consists, farther, in the special Favour of God, which is quite distinct from the pardon of sin; as it is very possible for a criminal to be pardoned, without being made a favourite. This favour, and a sense of it (called in Scripture, the ‘seeing of God’) form, presumptively, a considerable part of the joy of heaven. When the soul is completely possessed of divine love, and knows that it will continue for ever—that is Eternal Life: and that too is enjoyed, in some measure, by every true believer.

BUT to such a conclusion the Light of Nature could never have led us: for that the pardoned rebel should become a favoured son, is not a result of natural experience. To the Gospel alone it belonged to state, that Christ has not only *made an end of sins*, but also *brought in everlasting righteousness*;* and purchased for us the blessings of his Father’s love, as well as an exemption from his wrath. *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*† Many are the instances of persons, who without any enthusiasm or self-delusion have had this joyful perception of the divine favour shed abroad in their souls, far exceeding whatever comfort any other faith could affect to bestow.

NOR can any merely human religion pretend to declare, how this special favour of God is to be attained, or how long it shall continue: whereas the Gospel gives us full assurance that sinners, applying to the Saviour in the way of humble faith and hearty repentance, shall not only be released from guilt and it’s punishment, but also be beloved of the Father, and that everlastingly. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*‡ *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*§ Such is the uniform language of the New Testament.

3. THE happiness of Eternal Life consists, lastly, in the Pleasure arising from the regular operation of all our powers and passions. This was, undoubtedly, a great part of the happiness of Adam, the man of innocence. Pre-

* 1 Dan. ix. 24. † Rom. v. 10. ‡ Acts iii. 19. § Acts xvi. 31.

viously to his fall, his reason (it may be presumed) was the guide of his inferior faculties, and his affections and appetites in sweet harmony obeyed it's guidance. No irregular anger fired his blood, no intemperate desires vitiated his nature or polluted his pleasures, no tumults of envy or hatred or malice disturbed his tranquillity—such as we now, alas! too generally feel, and lament much oftener than we can conquer. And so, but in a far more glorious degree, so shall it be again; when we are raised from the ruins of our present state, and our eternal life is made complete in heaven. But before we arrive at that final glory, the same sort of happiness is, in some measure, begun in the breast of every true believer. This pledge of the perfect blessedness, which we hope for, arises from faith *in the Son of God*. For as soon as we can firmly believe, that we are for his sake beloved of the Father (which we can only do, when through his grace we feel ourselves enabled to *turn from our wickedness*) what have we farther to do, but to abide in his love? We learn to despise the temptations, which on all sides solicit our passions, and proceed onward in peace and joy. Possessing the Supreme, we have no craving after created and inferior Good. We have Christ himself for our leader, and our example; and, truly believing on him, we *walk as he also walked*. *

HERE the Deist will perhaps tauntingly ask, "Is not your sense of the divine favour a mere delusion of fancy, without any solid foundation of reason?" "No," may the Christian steadfastly reply, "this is no affectation of mysterious inward light, these are no foolish or fanatical visions of peace and joy; because high as are my hopes, they are built on a due apprehension of the justice, as well as the mercy of God. *He is faithful, and just* (in consideration of what Christ endured for us) *to forgive us our sins*.† Besides, I have consciously undergone a real and mighty change. The several powers of my nature, which used to be in a state of perpetual warfare, are now hushed in heavenly harmony. My severest reason approves the transformation, and owns it to be divine.

I proceed to consider,

II. The other constituent of Eternal Life, Holiness.

This may be described by the five following ingredients:

1. An uncompromising Hatred of all Sin;

* 1 John ii. 6.

† i. 9.

2. A pious Contempt of the present World, as compared with that which is future;

3. A genuine Delight in the worship and society of God;

4. An active Zeal in his service; and

5. A hearty Love of our fellow-creatures, and more especially of fellow-christians.

1. The Hatred of Sin is complete in heaven. In that blessed place, nothing but obedience is to be found: *the spirits of just men are there made perfect.** And, in a degree, it is discovered in believers upon earth: for *he, that abideth in Christ, sinneth not*; † i. e. not with full purpose of will, not without an inward and sincere reluctancy, implying the combat of the Spirit against the flesh; he does not make sinning his business, and his delight. This is a happy testimony of the truth of the Gospel, that *faith in the Son of God purifieth the heart.* ‡

THERE have been human religions, which have professed a renunciation of certain sins, but then they have indulged others. Some have made cruelty a part of their worship, and enjoined the sacrifices of mankind upon the altars of their blood-thirsty deities. Others, though they have forbidden murder, have countenanced every species of impurity. A third class have commended chastity; but, with it, they have also commended resentment and revenge. The old philosophers, in opposing carnal passion, gratified their pride. Whereas the object of the Gospel is, to restrain men from every species of transgression; to refine the soul in all it's powers, to enforce the observance of the Duties, both of the First and the Second Table, and, in short, to regenerate the whole man. *They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* § This was abundantly manifested in the primitive Christians. Appealing to the members of the Corinthian Church, the Apostle says, "*So vile were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*" || Philosophy had been carried to a great length in Corinth: Yet all their learning was insufficient to reform them, for we find they were still a profligate people, till the light of Christianity breaking in upon their souls effected such an alteration, that the world looked on with amazement, and thought it strange they no longer ran with it to the same excess of riot. ¶ A drunkard became temperate, a licentious

* Heb. xii. 23. † 1 John iii. 6. ‡ Acts xv. 9. § Gal. v. 24.
 || 1 Cor. vi. 11. ¶ 1 Pet. iv. 4.

person made an example of chastity, a cruel and passionate temper rendered mild and humane—this was miracle, and demonstration; this incontrovertibly witnessed, that the Gospel whence it originated was divine.

2. A second part of holiness is, a pious Contempt of the present World, as compared with that which is future.

WITH what a sacred disdain may we not suppose the inhabitants of heaven to look down upon the amusements and businesses, which fill our hearts with pleasure or with pain, and our flesh with constant labour! Dwelling in the full sight of those glories, which on earth they humbly hoped for, they despise every thing below the skies. And this state of feeling belongs, in a certain measure, to every true believer. For he is not a believer, who has not to a great degree got above *the world, and the things that are in the world: This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.** In proportion as Christianity possesses vitality and vigour in the soul, the Christian approaches to heaven. The affairs of this life are alike beneath his desires, and his views. He engages in them indeed so far, as they have been made a part of his earthly duty; but he longs for that upper region, whither his hopes are gone before. Pain and poverty, reproach and even death itself, have been condemned by believers with more true honour to the Gospel, than other religions have ever derived from similar instances of fortitude in their followers.

OTHER religions, it is true, have held out a contempt of these things: but then it has been only here and there a person of a hardier mould of body, one in an age or a nation, who through a firmness of natural spirits, and an obstinate resolution (attained, perhaps, by much labour of meditation) has carried the principle into effect. Whereas Christianity records her hundreds, and her thousands: and that not only where the natural spirits were firmer, or the thoughts had been abstracted from objects of sense by intellectual exercises; but the weak, and the young, and the delicate, have triumphantly trampled upon the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows, of the world.

In the Motives, likewise, of this contempt the religion of the Cross far surpasses all others. Others have taught men to despise the ‘good things’ (as they are called) of life, and to be unconcerned about it’s evils, in a mere romantic way. Such was the doctrine of the Stoics, affirming that

* 1 John, v. 4.

health and wealth, sleep and safety, had in them nothing to be sought; nor, on the other hand, pain and poverty, hunger and shame, any thing to be shunned. Thus, inverting the use of words, they would make of us stocks and stones, rather than intelligent and holy despisers of earthly things—those things, which Christianity teaches us to despise, in the prospect of that eternal world where both the good and the evil things are of infinitely higher importance: where *the glory which shall be revealed* is such, that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with it*;* and on the contrary, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*.†

FARTHER: other doctrines have endeavoured to raise the mind above the solitudes of the world upon principles unworthy of human nature, denying the immortality of the soul and a life to come. Thus the Epicureans asserted, that ‘death was an eternal sleep, and that the whole man perished irrecoverably in the grave.’ But the Gospel, by *bringing life and immortality to light*, leads us on to a glorious contempt of all earthly vanities. *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*.‡

OTHER religions have taught their followers, not so much to despise riches and pleasures, as to exchange them for fame and popular applause. This they looked upon as their Chief Good. To such an imputation even Cicero himself, one of the most illustrious of the Heathens, is justly liable. Whereas the Christian *both labours and suffers reproach, because he trusts in the living God, and has the promise of the life to come*;§ despising glory, as well as every thing else which is generally esteemed desirable, when placed in competition with his eternal hopes.

OTHERS, again, in affecting to condemn the pomps and grandeurs of life, have neglected all its necessary duties and decencies, and degraded themselves to the level of brute beasts. Such were the Cynics. But the Christian is diligent in all his services toward both God and man, and fulfils the duties of his present state with usefulness and honour, while he eagerly looks forward to that which is future and invisible.

Thus, if we consider either the degree of this part of Holiness (viz. Contempt of the World), the reasons upon which it is founded, or the extent to which it has under

* Rom. viii. 18. † Mark ix. 44. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 1. § 1 Tim. iv. 10, 8.

various forms of religion prevailed, we shall find that the Gospel has infinitely the advantage of every other.

5. A third part of the Holiness of eternal life consists in, a Genuine Delight in the Worship and Society of God. This is perfect in heaven. *There are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.** Now this end also is, in a good measure, attained by Christianity. It brings the soul to delight in divine worship: whereas no human religion has ever been able to teach a sinner, how he might dare to appear with assurance and comfort in that high and holy presence. The sweet serenity, diffused over the souls of those whose faith in Christ is lively and strong, when they stand before God, supplies an inward and irresistible testimony to the divinity of the Gospel.

OTHER doctrines, if they have taught men to abandon the vanities of the world, have taught them at the same time that their better happiness must flow from themselves, and made their own virtues their heaven. These self-sufficient systems, far from representing their *rivers of pleasure* as flowing from the right-hand of God, have even denied all dependence upon him in this respect. But Christianity gives us juster, and more satisfactory, views upon the subject. *In His presence*, we are assured, *is fullness of joy.*† Hence the believer rejoices in every opportunity of approaching him, as forming upon earth the beginning of heaven; and this delight is a powerful witness to the truth of his religion.

4. AN active Zeal in the Service of God constitutes another part of the Holiness of eternal life. That heaven is not a state of mere indolent enjoyment, we have abundant reason to believe. The *angels, exceeding in strength, do the commandments of their Lord:‡* The *spirits of just men made perfect*, we believe, are like angels: and we are taught to pray, that our Father's *will may be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*§ This strenuous diligence in the divine service, indeed, is the very temper and practice of the true Christian, even in the ordinary actions of his life: *Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he does all to the glory of God.*||

BUT among the professors of no other religion was this active zeal to be found. Their motives of action, if not their own satisfaction, the indulgence of their

* Rev. vii. 15. † Ps. xvi. 11. ‡ Ib. ciii. 20. § Matt. vi. 10.
|| 1 Cor. x. 31.

vanity, or the affectation of surpassing rival sectaries, were at best the reasonableness of virtue, and the benefit accruing from it to society at large. But these are motives fluctuating in principle, and questionable in result. Whereas, when we see a person nobly negligent of his own self-interests, yet at the same time steadfastly and uniformly pursuing the honour of an invisible God, we may safely pronounce that such an one is under influences above what mere nature impresses upon him. *He has the witness in himself.*

5. THE last constituent of Holiness is, a Hearty Love of our Fellow-Creatures, and especially of Fellow-Christians. This is a splendid ingredient of Eternal Life, a beautiful part of the image of that God, who *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust* :* and to exemplify this, our Lord himself, who *is the true God and eternal life*, † came down from heaven. Now this is, in some measure, imitated in the practice of every true believer. He is enjoined, by his religion, to *love his neighbour as himself* ; ‡ to forgive freely those who offend or injure him, as he hopes himself to be forgiven for his trespasses against God ; § honestly to rejoice in the welfare of his fellow-creatures ; in short, to *do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*. ||

OF this diffusive beneficence other religions know little, or nothing. The heathens *lived, generally, in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another*. ¶ They did not so much even as aspire to that divine virtue, the love of enemies. That was the noble singularity of the Gospel. On the contrary, they made revenge one of the great attributes of their Hero. *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared*, these bad passions were to be banished from the heart and the practice of his followers. This then, also, bears testimony to the divinity of the Christian doctrines.

All these parts of Eternal Life, indeed, are not to be found equally, nor eminently, in every believer. But, taken collectively—Pardon of Sin, and consequent Peace of Conscience ; the Favour of God, and a sense of it ; with the soothing Harmony of all our passions and powers ; a pious Contempt of the World, it's pains and it's pleasures ; genuine Delight in the Worship and Society of God ; an

* Matt. v. 45. † 1 John v. 20. ‡ Matt. xxii. 39. § vi. 14, 15.
 || Gal. vi. 10. ¶ Tit. iii. 3, 4.

Active Zeal in his service; and a hearty Love of our Fellow-Creatures, especially if they be Fellow-Christians—they supply a *cloud of witnesses*, far superior to those of any other religion claiming to be of divine origin. And of all these qualities every true believer possesses a portion, wrought into his heart and exemplified in his life. Where none of them, in fact, are to be discovered, that person cannot with any just ground of hope profess himself a Christian.

HENCE, therefore, we may deduce an infallible rule for self-examination. Have we, in ourselves, this *divine witness* of our Christianity? Have we, by relying upon the merits of the Saviour, conceived a solid hope of pardoning grace, and thence derived peace of conscience? Do we find a sincere love of God kindled in our souls by a sense of his special favour? Are our faculties, and appetites, held in subjection and tranquillity? Have we a hatred of sin, in some degree answerable to what the saints and angels have in heaven? Do we feel a sacred disdain of the world, whether it smile or frown upon us? Have we a delight in the worship of God? Are we zealous for his service? And do we strive to do the will of our heavenly Father? How stand our hearts affected toward our fellow-creatures? Do we *do to our neighbours, as we would that they should do to us*?* Can we forgive our enemies? Do we rejoice in the temporal and spiritual welfare of others without envy, and give the humble followers of Christ a large share in our affections? If this be the character and temper of our spirits, and this the conduct of our lives, then may we trust that Eternal Life is begun in us, and that we raise the edifice of our hopes upon a solid foundation, to be perfected by the continuing grace of God in the land of immortality.

III. It remains to be inquired, In what respects this *Inward Witness* exceeds all other testimonies. And,

1. It is a Witness, which dwells less in the head than in the heart. It is known by being felt and practised, and not by being merely reasoned upon; and hence it has some prerogatives above all the external evidences of the truth of Christianity. In particular, it is always at hand. Not lost through the weakness of the brain, the defect of the memory, or long absence from books and study, it can never be forgotten so long as true religion remains in the bosom; for it is graven there in deep and legible characters.

* Luke vi. 31.

A Christian, who has well studied the doctrines and the proofs of the Gospel, can give sufficient *reasons of the hope that is in him* : *—" In the Miracles and Prophecies, as well as in other respects, I find satisfactory testimony of the divinity of the Christian faith. But a still more convincing miracle has been wrought upon my heart. My conscience, which was previously disturbed by the guilt of sin, is now upon a solid confidence of pardon established in peace. I have an interest in the love of God, I abhor sin, I live above the world, and delighting in the company of him that dwells in heaven, I walk *as seeing the Invisible*.† I have a zeal for his glory, and I love all his creatures, especially those who resemble him. The discoveries of his nature and his works, made to me in the Gospel, have bowed down my spirit to adore him : the revelations of his amazing condescension have fired my heart to love him. By the examples of superlative piety, there proposed, I have been excited to holy emulation : and the motives, which it suggests, are at once so awful and so alluring, that all my powers of hope and fear combine to constrain me to obedience. I feel, in short, that I am totally altered from what I once was ; and the change is of a nature, which bears irresistible evidence that my religion is from God."

2. It is a Witness, which will in some measure appear in the life, whenever it is written in the heart. Is it possible, indeed, that a man should possess peace of conscience, a humble sense of the love of God, and a calm satisfaction in his favour, without manifesting something of this in his aspect and behaviour? That he should show no serenity of countenance, no sweetness of temper, no inward joy? Is it possible, that he should have an utter hatred of iniquity, a holy contempt of the world (as compared with the future glories, upon which his eye is fixed), a glowing zeal for God, and a hearty love for man—and not display it to the world? Surely, his life will be with his heart, and his heart with his treasure, in heaven.‡ *Brethren*, says the Apostle, under the influence of these hopes and feelings, *our conversation is in heaven*.§

THIS testimony, it is true, cannot be communicated to others, in the same measure in which it is felt by believers. In this respect it is like the hidden manna, which none know except they that taste of it : as Jonathan, when faint in pursuing the enemy, ate of the honey, and *his eyes were enlightened*.|| But it will always exhibit itself in one way or

* 1 Pet. iii. 15. † Heb. xi. 27. ‡ Matt. vi. 21. § Phil. iii. 20.
|| 1 Sam. xiv. 27.

other, in their language, or in their deportment. They will not be too much *conformed to this world*,* if they mean to give glory or evidence to the religion of Christ.

3. THIS Witness, though spiritual in it's nature, may be justified to the strictest reason. It is no matter of mere fancy, or enthusiasm : for, while the believer feels it working strongly in his heart and soul, he finds also the convincing force of it upon his understanding. He knows, that he was once *dead in trespasses and sins* ;† but now he is alive to God, and to righteousness : and hence he concludes, by the justest rules of reasoning, that the doctrine to which he owes this blessed resurrection must be divine.

It is a witness, however, dishonoured by too many in these days, who refer it to inward impulses and vehement irrational impressions upon the mind. This has tempted the profane mocker to pronounce the devout efforts of Christian piety the mere flashes of a kindled blood and vapours puffed about with every wind. Whereas the testimony of the Spirit, explained as above, must approve itself to all the sober and serious part of mankind.

4. This Witness is, in the very nature of things, infallible ; and where the divine life arises to any considerable height, gives an assurance to the Christian, that his religion is true. It is not probable, indeed, that God would suffer so divine a testimony to belong to any doctrine, but that which he himself has revealed.

5. THIS Witness is ever prompt and powerful to baffle the most learned sophisms, and the boldest temptations. Suppose a subtle philosopher should pretend to prove, that ‘ bread is unwholesome,’ or ‘ that water is useless to allay thirst’—I may confidently maintain, in opposition to him, the wholesomeness of the one and the utility of the other ; for I daily experience both. The quibbles of logic, against the sense of a true believer, are but as darts of straw and stubble against the scaly sides of the Leviathan.

WHEN the Greek, who *seeks after wisdom*, says to a Christian ; “ How can your simple Gospel, which was invented by a Jewish peasant, and preached by a parcel of fishermen, be divine ? ” the Christian may reply, that ‘ all the wisdom of philosophy could never perform such a miracle as it has done, could never work such a divine life and temper in the heart.’ When the Hebrew shall ask, “ How can your Jesus be the Messiah ? Our Messiah must be a great king, deliver the Jews from their state of thralldom, and have

* Rom. xii. 2.

† Eph. ii. 1.

power over all nations : whereas yours was crucified among his countrymen, and lay like a mere mortal in his grave." The Christian may answer, 'He, that *was unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness, is to me Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.** I have found holiness wrought in my soul by the belief of his Gospel. Such virtue has proceeded from him that I, who was before unclean, am now in some degree cleansed. He must, therefore, be the Messiah, *the Son of God.*' When the Deist shall demand, "How can you deem divine a religion delivered in so mean a way as the strange story and still stranger doctrines of Christ ; or regard as the word of God a volume containing so much of obscurity and mysticism, and so little of eloquence or argument, that any learned man would be ashamed to have written it?" the Christian may tell him ; 'The Gospel, which you thus impiously slander, although it may have some petty imperfections in your eyes, has been to me *the power of God unto salvation.*† While such is it's divine efficacy, let it want what human ornaments it may, I am sure it is from above.'

6. THIS Witness does not depend on the exact correctness of letters and syllables, on a critical knowledge of the original languages of Scripture, or on this old manuscript and that new translation. The substance of Christianity is so scattered throughout the whole of the New Testament, more particularly the Epistolary parts of it, that every manuscript and every translation contains enough to *persuade any one to be a Christian.*‡ How exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, in many cases it is to decide, which was originally the genuine word or sentence ! But the humble believer has always learned so much of Gospel-truth, in which all copies agree, as has wrought in him a divine life ; and, therefore, he is sure that it is, substantially, from God.

Now this is of admirable use, in the religious world, upon many accounts. For, first, let us but consider how few of the unlearned are capable of comprehending the arguments necessary to prove the divine authority of the Sacred Writings : how few, even among the learned, can conclusively determine many of the various readings, or different translations, of particular passages in them ! The wise Christian, however, does not build his faith and hope merely upon one or two insulated texts, but upon the general sum and spirit of the Gospel—the great doctrines of the satisfaction for sin by the blood of Christ, and the renewal of our

* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

† Rom. i. 16.

‡ Acts xxvi. 28.

corrupt natures by the Holy Spirit; with the necessity of repentance, faith, and holiness to salvation. By these, he feels a life of piety and peace begun within him: and hence, though a word here or a sentence there may be incorrectly transcribed or wrongly translated, or even though some small parts of the volume may with difficulty be proved authentic, he is abundantly convinced that Christianity is divine.

AGAIN; let us note the audacious assaults made upon our faith by the Deists of modern days, misrepresenting and ridiculing the narratives and doctrines of the Bible, and then demanding; "How can you believe, that this book is the word of God?" In such an hour of contest, how happy is the humble Christian, who can answer: "Though I am not able to solve all it's perplexities, or maintain it's sacred authority against the cavils of art and learning, yet I feel that it's doctrines have subdued my sinful appetites, and raised me from death to life; have made me love God above all things, and given me a well-grounded hope of his love in return. I cannot doubt, therefore, but that it's chief principles are from heaven."

I might farther add, that from this particular view of the subject great support is derived in hours of temptation, when the sudden thought may invade the mind even of the learned; "What if the Scripture should not, after all, be divine? What if this Gospel, and that Epistle, should be merely the words of men, and not written by the pen of inspiration?" The believer, who feels within himself the workings of a divine life as above detailed, may firmly repel the suggestion, by recollecting that 'though he cannot immediately recollect all the arguments, which prove the writers of the New Testament to have been inspired; yet their compositions must needs be so, since from them began the Eternal Life in his soul.' Though there are many decisive arguments, indeed, drawn from criticism and history and other provinces of human learning, to establish the divine authority of the Bible, this is the chief evidence to which the far greater part of mankind can ever attain; viz. That they have found a heavenly change effected in them by reading or hearing it's doctrines and it's precepts, it's promises and it's threatenings; and conclude the God of truth would not attach to a book, which was not what it affected to be, such glorious instances of his power and grace.

I have dwelt the longer on this sixth property of the *inward witness*, because I think it of great importance in

an age beset with Deists and Infidels; as it will defend a Christian in the profession of the true religion, though he may not have skill or learning enough to defend his Bible.

7. THIS Witness is universal. Belonging to every true believer, it is enjoyed in some measure by the weak as well as by the strong, by him who is but young in grace and knowledge as well as by him who is grown up to the full stature of evangelical manhood. Even the very humblest, who cannot argue for the doctrine of Christ, may still find *Christ within him the hope of glory*.* He feels something of a sacred influence from the Gospel, to which no other doctrine can pretend; and therefore, though he cannot from the weakness of his attainments answer all the cavils of scoffers, his faith is incapable of being shaken by them.

8. LASTLY, this Witness is, or ought to be, constantly advancing and improving. *We all*, says the Apostle, *with open face beholding (as in a glass) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory*,† from one degree of splendid holiness to another: and thus the Gospel shines forth with a clearer, a brighter, and a stronger evidence.

HENCE it comes to pass that, when Christians have attained to a good degree of faith and practical purity, every temptation which would turn them aside from their high career loses its force. They have found more and more of this Eternal Life wrought into their hearts; they have got nearer to heaven; they have pressed on continually toward perfection: a growing peace of conscience, and diviner sensations of the love of God have been communicated to them; their own love, both to God and man, has increased; they have felt in their breasts an augmented abhorrence of iniquity; their holy contempt of the world has continually gathered strength; they take greater delight in the worship and society of God; and their zeal for his service has become daily warmer, and more active.

How magnificent then, it may be remarked in conclusion, is the dispensation of the Cross! How preferable to all other religions! Even that of the Jews, though divinely revealed, had less honourable characters belonging to it. Many expressions, occurring in the writings of St. Paul, ascribe an infinite superiority over the Law to the Gospel, in point both of evidence and of glory. One was the Letter, the other is the Spirit; one *the ministration of condemna-*

* Col. i. 27.

† 2 Cor. iii. 18.

tion, the other of *salvation*. So much carnality, indeed, entered into the scheme of the Jewish constitution, that they could not be raised wholly above the world; nor were they so expressly enjoined the practice of the duties of love and forgiveness, as Christianity both requires and produces in the hearts of sincere believers.

2. AGAIN; an excellent rule is here supplied for examining, whether we possess true faith or not. If we do, it will infallibly be accompanied with the evidence which we have been considering: for the Eternal Life begun in the soul proves the truth not merely of the Christian doctrine, but also of the faith of it's professors. The moral duties both of the First and the Second Table will, in a great degree, be transcribed into the life, wherever the Gospel is written in the heart. On the other hand, such as neglect those duties, or indulge themselves in a careless performance of them, can never have within themselves this decisive testimony. They may be Heathens, heroes, philosophers—in short, any thing but Christians.

3. WE may hence, likewise, learn the true method of confirming our souls in the tenets of the New Testament. Needful indeed it is, in this our day, to be well seasoned with arguments against it's dangers and temptations. Christianity begins to be, again, a *stumbling-block*; and many of it's followers waver and are led away, sometimes to one new doctrine, sometimes to another—because they feel, alas! so little of it's efficacy in their hearts.

If you cannot argue for the Gospel either with learning, or from experience, what will you do in the hour of trial? Now Christians are, in general, too slightly instructed in those methods of knowledge, by which they might be capable of giving satisfactory answers to it's adversaries. But, if a learned and ingenious infidel should inquire, 'Why you believe in Jesus?' "I have felt the efficacy of his teaching on my heart," will be a sufficient reply.

4. If there be this *inward witness* belonging to those who *believe on the Son of God*, then have you the strongest encouragement to profess that belief under the most virulent persecutions. *Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial*,* says St. Peter; for in such a trial the Gospel has sustained thousands, and you also it will sustain under similar circumstances. Thus shall we learn to *resist* (like the ancient martyrs) if necessary, even *unto blood*,† if we have the seal of this truth abiding in our souls:

* 1 Pet. iv. 12.

† Heb. xii. 4.

5. LASTLY ; here, also, we are taught the best way of propagating Christianity in the world. Let this inward testimony, the Eternal Life wrought in our souls, display itself in all our outward behaviour. So did the primitive Christians *by their conversation** win Gentiles and unbelievers. When men behold your humble faith and holy fear, your zeal for God and your delight in his worship, your gentleness, your kindness toward your fellow-creatures, your desire of the salvation of others, and your invariable readiness to deny yourselves for their good, they will be persuaded to the acceptance of the same doctrines and the discharge of the same duties. How would such visible rhetoric silence the most pertinacious of objectors ! If they should ask, "What do you more than others?" You might confidently challenge all the philosophers, and all the devotees of other religions, to show such husbands and wives, such parents and children, such masters and servants, such lovers of God and man, as Christianity has produced.

Most incumbent then is it upon those, who have believed the Gospel, to live as though a part of themselves was already in heaven ! It is an appalling subject of reflexion, indeed, to think how much the honour of Christ is obscured, and the promulgation of Christianity obstructed, by those who exhibit not this sacred Witness in their holiness of heart and practice !

* 1 Pet. iii. 1.

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